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Cover picture

"Untitled: Wall of Visions" by Alonso Davis, reproduced from *Community Murals: The people's art* by Alan W. Barnett (Simon & Schuster, 1983, £9.95, 0857982 030 6).

Reagan and the right

Dennis H. Wrong

GILLIAN PEELE
Revival and Reaction: The right in contemporary America
266pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £17.50.
0 198211309
RONNIE DUGGER
On Reagan: The man and his presidency
616pp. New York: McGraw-Hill. \$19.95.
0 07 017974 3
ROBERT DALLEK
Ronald Reagan: The politics of symbolism
221pp. Harvard University Press. £14.
0 67477940 1

All the evidence suggests just about as strongly as it could that Ronald Reagan will be re-elected for a second presidential term. He appears likely to win a much larger proportion of the popular vote than in 1980. In contrast to Eisenhower in the 1950s, Reagan's background hardly suggests a genial father-figure, tolerant, centrist and above fierce partisanship with respect to the issues of the day. In 1980 in the primaries he was the successful candidate of the militant and angry right wing of his party. The Republican convention in Dallas last August that renominated him was almost totally dominated by the right wing and Reagan's acceptance speech stridently assailed the Democrats and stressed themes with a special appeal to his following on the right.

If Reagan not only wins decisively but also helps the Republicans to retain control of the Senate and, more important, to overcome or reduce significantly the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives, the policy initiatives favoured by the Republican right will loom as large as (or even larger than) they did for the first two years of Reagan's initial term. But even if the Democrats retain enough seats in Congress to impose restraints on the White House for the next four years, the power of the right in the Republican Party will remain greater than at any time in recent memory and will ensure at the very least a ferocious struggle to succeed Reagan in 1988.

This is therefore a timely moment for the publication of Gillian Peele's concise but thorough account of the American right, more timely than she could possibly have imagined when she conceived the study and began her research in 1979, before Reagan had become his party's presidential candidate and enabled the scattered and heterogeneous groups on the right to coalesce and move into the mainstream of American politics. The books by Ronnie Dugger and Robert Dallek are narrower in focus, attuned to the present presidential campaign and unambiguously partisan in the alarm and even outrage they express over Reagan's outlook and many of his administration's policies.

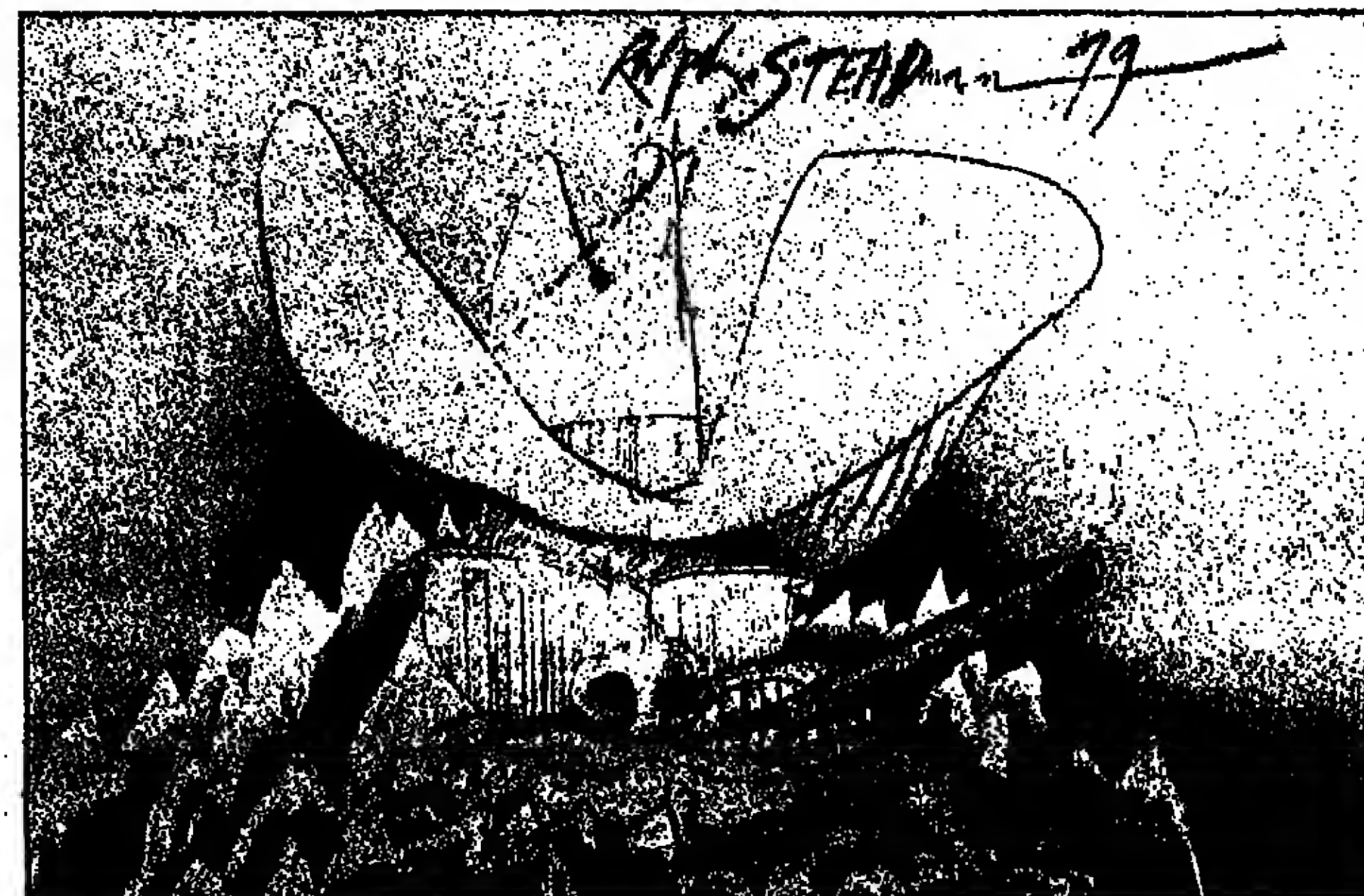
The core of Peele's book is her description of three groups that emerged in the 1970s as new presences in American politics: the "neo-conservative" intellectuals centred largely in New York City; the so-called "New Right" composed of various individuals and organizations who have used new mailing and fund-raising technologies to promote opposition to particular domestic and foreign policies as well as to individual candidates for office; and the religious right based on the growing Protestant fundamentalist sects and denominations, several of whose leaders have been popular evangelists on television. Peele's detailed knowledge as an Oxford political scientist of American government and politics enables her in the last half of her book to relate the rise of the new right to the history of the Republican Party and its long-standing split over the New Deal, to social policy and the Reagan administration's sensitivity to the right's demands for welfare cut-backs and statutory recognition of the authority of traditional Christian morality, and to more muted and less salient pressures affecting foreign policy.

Revival and Reaction will be of great value to British readers who have viewed these stirrings in American politics from afar, often with bafflement and apprehension. It has less to offer informed Americans, perhaps inevitably since it is largely descriptive rather than interpretative, let alone speculative or disposed to peer into the future. The author deserves much credit for her general accuracy.

On the subject about which I am most knowledgeable, neo-conservatism as an ideological-intellectual tendency, Peele provides a balanced account of the diversity of individuals and views associated with it and is particularly acute in noting the strain between its acceptance of the inevitability of a mixed economy (the reason, after all, for the "neo" in neo-conservative) and its frequent dalliance with pure free-market doctrines of the Friedmanite or supply-side variety. She is sounder on the present views of neo-conservatives than on their past history where, although her entirely acceptable source is Daniel Bell's remembrances of New York intellectual life since the 1930s, she misses some of his "insider's" ironies and nuances and misrepresents in minor ways what he says. She correctly relates the evolution of the neo-conservatives to their past attitudes towards Communism and the Soviet Union, but somehow the existence of a vigorous anti-Stalinist left, visible and influential at times out of proportion to its numbers (much like the neo-conservatives today), escapes her notice. The most prominent neo-conservatives were nurtured in this milieu, but they were not necessarily representative of it either in their responses to the Cold War and

recent "neo-liberal" tendency among leading Democratic politicians and political journalists. They may yet find themselves compelled to resist or to strive to temper the ideological militancy of other factions of the new right should these groups become more powerful during a second Reagan term. Certainly, they can hardly be delighted by the impassioned debate over the proper relation of religion to politics and the state, centring on the question of abortion, that is currently dominating the presidential campaign.

The right-wing populists and Protestant fundamentalists do not represent an intrusive new force in American politics. They have, however, benefited greatly from the changing electoral geography that has increased the power of the Sunbelt at the expense of the Northeast and the Midwest as well as from extensive use of high-powered new communications techniques. But liberals who in order to account for the resurgence of the right have dusted off Richard Hofstadter's essays on "the paranoid style" in American politics have perhaps missed the point. Earlier groups on the far right in this century may have displaced their anger and frustration over modern life and the remorseless social changes it promotes on to



Reproduced from Ralph Steadman's *Between the Eyes* (240pp. Cape, £9.95, 0 224 02280 6).

McCarthyism in the 1950s or to the Vietnam war and the New Left in the 1960s. Peele's suggestion that the Jewishness of the leading neo-conservatives contributed to their later sympathy for religion as a bulwark of tradition strikes me as very dubious; the impact of the Holocaust and identification with Israel in face of the pro-PLO sentiments of much of the post-1960s left were far more important influences on their rightward movement, although once again others who never became neo-conservatives shared (and still share) these attitudes.

Peele is right to consider the neo-conservatives worthy of detailed attention despite their small numbers in comparison to the seemingly formidable electoral potential of other groups on the right. A few neo-conservative journals lapse too frequently into a nasty, indiscriminate left-baiting tone that is reminiscent of the venomous polemical rhetoric of the Marxist sectarians to whom some of them were exposed in their youth. But in general the neo-conservatives represent something quite new in giving intellectual respectability to conservatism and to support for the more conservative of the two major parties and a nationalist foreign policy, even if their major achievement is to impose higher standards of coherence and rationality on the counter-arguments they provoked from the still much more numerous liberals and leftists in the academic and intellectual world.

It is one of those familiar ironies of history that these intellectuals should have moved to the right just at a time when the Eastern "moderate" Republicans were being reduced by the rise of Reagan to nearly total impotence within their party (although they retain considerable strength in Congress and state governments). Most of the neo-conservatives would undoubtedly feel more at home with figures like Nelson Rockefeller, Jacob Javits, Elliot Richardson and Henry Kissinger in foreign policy, or even, for that matter, with the more

negative symbols of imaginary Jewish, Wall Street or Communist conspiracies, but their heirs today are at least paranoid with real enemies, as the quip goes.

Their animus is directed against changes that have taken place since the 1960s in laws and customs governing sexual conduct and expression, the status of women, marriage and the family, the treatment of crime, and traditional religious beliefs. Changes in these areas were often introduced suddenly through court decisions and bureaucratic policies rather than by legislation following prolonged public debate and political competition. This is not to say that the trend towards greater "permissiveness" was necessarily unpopular: opinion polls continue to show comfortable majorities in favour of legal abortion, the most politically embedded issue of all. But it is not surprising that abrupt, imposed changes violating the deeply held traditional beliefs of many people should have belatedly inspired an oppositional movement. It has happened before, in American history. Such counter-movements usually peter out without restoring the *status quo ante*, but they sometimes win temporary yet consequential legislative victories of which the Prohibition Amendment was the most noteworthy.

Where does President Reagan stand in relation to all this? Ronnie Dugger, a liberal Texas journalist who studied at Oxford, shows that in the course of his political career Reagan has upheld the conservative and right-wing position on just about every issue that has divided American liberals and conservatives over the past half-century. The list includes not only the "social issues" that have aroused the populist and religious right but welfare state programmes including even Social Security, virtually all government regulation of business, civil rights for women and minorities, military spending including on nuclear weapons, and an actively interventionist anti-Communist foreign policy practically everywhere in the world.

In addition to reviewing Reagan's most controversial actions as President and Governor of California, Dugger recounts every gaffe, factual mis-statement, callous remark and questionable jest that has provided such rich material for Reagan's critics and forced his staff to take unusual measures to protect him from unrehearsed public performances.

Dugger's documentation of the record is scrupulous; Peele cites him several times as a reliable source. He is well aware that Reagan's expressed views reflect not only his real beliefs but, inevitably, a manifest political opportunism which has led him to moderate them since becoming a national and world figure. Indeed, the centrepiece of Dugger's bulky book is the tapes of Reagan's radio talks in 1975-79, which Dugger succeeded in obtaining over the opposition of Reagan's lieutenants, who were reluctant to release them because of the uninhibited right-wing sentiments and opinions they contained in contrast to his less extreme newspaper columns of the same period. Dugger includes direct excerpts from the tapes in an appendix of more than sixty pages.

If Dugger pictures Reagan as a rigid, opinionated ideologue, Robert Dallek regards him no less critically as a superficial, poorly informed, stage-managed political actor unable to distinguish between gestures or ritual affirmations - "the politics of symbolism" - and the realities of government. Dallek, a University of California historian who has written several well-received books on American foreign policy, supports his judgment with a fuller review than is to be found in most recent books on Reagan of his two terms as Governor of California. If Dugger is right about the inflexibility and intensity of the right-wing commitments of Reagan and his closest backers, their opponents may take comfort from Dallek's view that Reagan is quite satisfied with a more "politics of symbolism".

Like many others, Dallek sees the transition in Reagan's political outlook as taking place when as president of the Screen Actors' Guild he came into conflict with its well-organized Communist faction, leading to his appearance as a friendly witness before the House Un-American Affairs Committee's "Hollywood Ten" investigation in 1947. Dugger is much more precise on when and how Reagan moved from left to right. He points out that for fully three years after his battles with the Hollywood Stalinists Reagan remained an ardent liberal Democrat, even campaigning for Harry Truman in 1948 and supporting the entire Democratic ticket in California in 1950, including Helen Gahagan Douglas for the Senate against Richard Nixon. Many American liberals, Dugger correctly notes, became strongly anti-Communist in these years without abandoning or diluting their liberalism. In Reagan's case, "the mystery about his metamorphosis is not his postwar turn against Stalinism, but his subsequent switch from liberalism to extreme reaction on domestic issues."

Will Reagan's re-election mean that the American public has moved decisively to the right? Not unless the Republicans also sweep Congress, which seems most improbable. Nixon's landslide in 1972 was accompanied by no Republican gains in the Senate and minor gains in the House. The most striking fact about Reagan's undeniable personal popularity - he is the best-liked president since Eisenhower - is that it does not extend to his policies. The opinion polls show majorities opposing further cuts in social programmes, increases in defence spending, restrictions on abortion, and sending American troops to Central America; approving a nuclear freeze and genuine negotiations with the Russians; and believing that a tax increase is probably necessary and that Reagan's tax policies and management of the economy are too favourable to the rich. This should add up to split-ticket voting in November, unless the Republicans are much more successful than the Democrats in registering previous non-voters, who are more likely to vote unreflectively for all candidates of the same party as their choice at the head of the ballot.

Americans usually elect incumbent presidents to a second term and nearly always by larger majorities than they received if they had been elected to their first term. Of the fifteen

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presidents preceding Reagan in this century, thirteen ran as incumbents and nine were elected. Of the four failures, Taft was challenged by a former president of his own party, which split the normal Republican vote. Hoover confronted the Great Depression. Gerald Ford had not even been elected to the vice-presidency and ran for a full term in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal that had elevated him to the highest office. Carter four years ago had been plagued during the last two years of his term by domestic economic crises and foreign policy humiliations. Because Ford and Carter were Reagan's predecessors there is a tendency to forget that the re-election of an incumbent president is the norm barring some unusual or disastrous event. It is no iron law—there are none governing human conduct at either the individual or the mass level—but there is a general disposition to feel that an incumbent who hasn't done too badly is entitled to another four years if he wants it. For Mondale, or any Democrat, to unseat Reagan there would have to be much deeper dissatisfactions with his policies and the state of the country than there appear to be. Perhaps such a situation might have developed if Reagan had followed through on hints about cutting Social Security benefits or had continued to frighten people by maintaining a belligerent tone towards the Soviet Union that seemed to rule out any possibility of arms control negotiations. But he beat a hasty retreat on both.

Apart from the prominence of the moral issues dear to the New Right and the Moral Majority, there is nothing in the least new about the conservatism affirmed by the Reagan administration. "Let's get the government off our backs" has been in one version or another a standard Republican injunction since at least the early years of the New Deal, implying opposition to high taxes, welfare spending and egalitarian social policies, and sympathy for the interests of the business community. In foreign policy, support for a military buildup to match the Soviet Union and antipathy to

wards neutralist régimes abroad have been the stock-in-trade of the Republican right since it rejected isolationism in the early post-war years. The bare majority that elected Reagan in 1980 was not suddenly converted to these tenets, nor will the large majority likely to vote for him this year have been won over to them. But Reagan's success rests on more than the repudiation of an unpopular Jimmy Carter or the duping of the electorate by a slick media campaign, as many liberals and Democrats still try wistfully to persuade themselves.

By 1980 a majority of the electorate wished to call a halt to the wave of reforms since the 1960s: increasing welfare entitlements (and taxes), the rights of women and minorities, and the curtailment of legal buttressing for traditional moral standards in various areas. Satisfaction with reform was already evident at the time of Nixon's 1972 landslide, but was subsequently diverted by the Watergate scandal. Many Americans were also eager in the wake of Vietnam and the Iranian hostage crisis to reaffirm the value of patriotism and to strengthen the United States, actually and symbolically, against the Soviet Union after Afghanistan and other anti-American states and terrorist groups abroad. The most obvious way to give expression to these attitudes was by voting Republican, just as four years earlier the obvious way to punish the Republicans for Watergate was to vote for the little-known Democratic presidential candidate. That is how electoral politics work under a two-party system; Reagan was its beneficiary in 1980 as any other Republican would have been, probably by a larger majority including a proportion of the 13 per cent of the popular vote won by John Anderson.

Most Americans like Ronald Reagan, seeing him as a forthright but friendly and jocular plebeian, warm-hearted, free from political deviousness, and essentially non-ideological, his political background and the policies of his administration notwithstanding. They are at present satisfied with a "politics of symbolism"

of a vaguer and more consensual sort than described in Dallek's book; the vivid pageantry of Reagan's current campaign suggests that his managers are well aware of this. Reagan is, in effect, a sort of "functional equivalent" of Eisenhower for the 1980s, despite the obvious differences between him and the General and the state of the country then and now. Always assuming that a Congressional landslide does not create a belief that the administration has a "mandate" to carry out more drastic right-wing policies, one may after another four years be able to answer affirmatively Peel's closing question: "Has the ideological colour faded, leaving a Republican President not so very different from Eisenhower, Nixon, or Ford?"

The effects of Reagan and the rise of the right on the Republican Party are more unambiguous. Last month Elliot Richardson, a moderate Republican of impeccable standing, was overwhelmingly defeated by a rich and obscure right-wing businessman in the Senate primary in Massachusetts, one of the most liberal states in the country. As the *New Republic* observed, "It's hard to imagine more dramatic or decisive evidence of the collapse of liberal Republicanism as an idea and as a force." It may be true that the "vocation" of liberal Republicans has been to "soften the stone heart of their party and their class", but it

is not easy to see how they can possibly remain much longer in a party dominated by the new right, whose spokesmen regularly revile them and invite them to leave.

Be it noted, however, that the immediate effect of Richardson's defeat is to increase the Democrats' chances of holding that Senate seat. It has become a standard theme on the left to suggest that the Democrats' best hopes, both for this year and the future, lie in registering more black voters and women suffering from what has been called the "feminization of poverty". There is certainly substantial new support to be won among these groups, but it is unlikely to be sufficient to reverse the Democratic decline and the new electoral geography favouring the Republicans, at least at the presidential level. The Democrats will also have to retain and even augment the constituency of relatively well-off young professionals who voted for Senator Hart in the primaries and are responsive to new "neo-liberal" themes. The fate of the liberal Republicans provides the Democrats therefore with a signal opportunity. That what happens within the Republican Party should be crucial to the future prospects of the Democratic Party is, however, evidence of how the latter has fallen since the years of its unquestionable ascendancy as the majority party.

Punished by the Senate

Geoffrey Marshall

PETER CHARLES HOFFER and N.E.H. HULL
Impeachment in America, 1635-1805
325pp. Yale University Press. £27.
0300030533

Is impeachment un-American? Is it unconstitutional? Does it violate the separation of powers? The answer to these (barely distinguishable) queries sounds as if it ought to be Yes. The trial and punishment of an offender by the Senate of the United States is an assumption of judicial power by legislators, not to say a denial of the equal protection of the laws, an infringement of due process and possibly a cruel and unusual punishment. But of course none of these pleas would have been available to President Richard Nixon (had he not resigned) or to any other victim since impeachment is specifically authorized by the sovereign constituent authority, "We the People of the United States" having inserted it in Article I of the Federal Constitution.

That same article on the other hand specifically forbids Congress to pass bills of attainder, an alternative form of legislative punishment. So one might wonder how and why the Parliamentary device of impeachment should have been adopted in a scheme of government that was rejecting the idea of legislative supremacy.

More than one answer has been given to this question. Raoul Berger in his essay on impeachment emphasized the Founders' familiarity with English precedents. P. C. Hoffer and N. E. H. Hull in this detailed study of the impeachment process at the State and Federal level, ending with the trial of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase, argue that the procedures adopted in the States prior to the drafting of the Federal Constitution were what had directly influenced the Federal provisions.

Impeachment as it developed in the colonial assemblies differed in some ways from the practice of Westminster. The authors show it as being, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, an alternative to court proceedings against misbehaviour and peculation by office-holders. In the first half of the eighteenth century it broadens into an instrument of legislative checking and balancing as against executive and judicial officers. From 1753 it becomes in part a tool to resist imperial policy.

The authors' insistence on its American genesis helps to explain the survival of impeachment as a republican device after Independence since it might otherwise have been seen as reflecting the uncontrolled power of the Westminster Commons that the colonists rejected, and also as involving an uncomfortable mixture (for pupils of Locke and Montesquieu) of legislative and judicial powers. In domesticated form though, it could be viewed less as a relic of Parliamentary jurisprudence

than as a tool of legislative inquiry used by the People's representatives. In this light it was approved by John Adams. In republican dress, he thought, it should be confined in scope to charges against office-holders with punishment limited to loss of office, rather than having the unrestrained scope of English Parliamentary impeachment. This in fact is the form now taken by impeachment in the Federal constitution. Article I(3) provides that "judgment in cases of impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from office and disqualification to hold any office of honour, trust or profit under the United States". Two-thirds of the Senators present must also concur in the verdict—a proviso that bears the stamp of federalism rather than popular democracy.

In the decade between 1798 and 1805 impeachment became entangled in the Republican-Federal political struggle. The impeachments of this period showed the potential elasticity of the offence, extending on some doctrines to any conduct having a dangerous tendency to undermine republican institutions, or embracing the still wider belief that the House of Representatives can define impeachable offences as it pleases (a recurrent heresy).

The failure of Chase's impeachment was a set-back to tendencies that would have made impeachment as unprincipled an engine of legislative oppression as attainder. The process described by Hoffer and Hull when set against the subsequent history of impeachment in the United States suggests a number of queries both about the constitutional basis of attainder and about its current utility as a political device. Juridically the American colonial assemblies never did have the right to exercise those powers of the Westminster High Court of Parliament that flowed (like its contempt power) from its judicial character. The assumption and use of these powers in a non-Parliamentary system that rejected the subordination of the Executive to the legislative branch set, and sit uneasily with American constitutional theory. But since the Parliamentary system developed a machinery of ministerial responsibility that made impeachment obsolete, it may be that the United States needs impeachment as a happy unprincipled limitation on the separation-of-powers doctrine. The controversies of recent years have refined but not entirely settled the question as to the boundaries of "high crimes and misdemeanours". Whether that question could be resolved by the Supreme Court is itself an issue that remains unresolved. Raoul Berger has argued that impeachments are judicially reviewable. Professor Charles Black thinks they are not. Since the question involves a contest of principles, and no decisive judicial authority, that is what legal theorists think of as a Hard Case, and political scientists, with books to write, would call a Good Thing.

The pullers of strings

H. G. Nicholas

VERNON BOGDANOR (Editor)
Parties and Democracy in Britain and America
282pp. Praeger. £27.50.
0030625998

MICHAEL J. MALBIN (Editor)
Money and Politics in the United States:
Financing elections in the 1980s
324pp. Chatham House Publishers Inc, Box 1,
Chatham, NJ, 07928. \$12.95.
0934540233

MARTIN P. WATTENBERG
The Decline of American Political Parties 1952-1980
168pp. Harvard University Press. £12.75.
0674194306

ROLAND PERRY
The Programming of the President: The hidden power of the computer in world politics today
232pp. Aurum Press. £7.95.
0906053781

Almost exactly forty years ago the president Denis Brogan, analysing what he saw already as "the American problem", surmised that a rising wave of party indiscipline might spread from Democrats to Republicans and that possibly both historical American parties might be "going through a necessary period of disintegration and adjustment". Six years later the "necessary period" had taken on such an air of permanency that a worried American Political Science Association conducted an inquiry of its own into what it discerned as a national malaise. The product of its deliberations was the celebrated report, "Towards a More Responsible Two-Party System". Now, a generation later, the concern persists; the decline of the American party system is both an established phenomenon and a hotly disputed development.

Established, because certain statistical trends admit of very little argument. Fewer people vote the straight ticket, more identify themselves as independents, in Congress there is a marked decrease in party-line voting. Behind such tangible and irrefutable facts about voting behaviour lies the non-statistical but none the less clearly observable decline in the whole role of party in the nominating and electoral process.

Disputed, however, because just when the chorus of decline seemed complete, less dependent second reflections began to suggest themselves. If one considered the parties in and of themselves, and apart from their standing with the voters, or even superficially with the candidates, might they not have begun in the 1980s a climb back to self-respect and viability? Evidence accumulates that as organizations, as self-perpetuating bureaucracies at the centre, the parties have re-asserted themselves, whatever may have been happening at their grass-roots.

It is at this point in the argument that Vernon Bogdanor's volume of studies and, at a slight tangent, Michael J. Malbin's *Money and Politics in the United States* enter the stage. *Parties and Democracy in Britain and America*, as revolving in physical appearance as it is excessive in price, is the product of a conference organized jointly by the Hansard Society and the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Though held some three years ago, the conference appears, on the evidence of these papers, to provide a fair enough indication of the attitudes and assessments prevailing in this area amongst a representative cross-section of students of politics, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Widely, no formal pattern of transatlantic comparisons has been attempted. Some papers avowedly compare, some (eg, the editor's own assessment of Mrs Thatcher's 1983 triumph) confine themselves to a single country. Nevertheless all are diffused by an awareness of what is going on in each democracy and by a general assumption that within the accepted limits of each country's distinctive institutions similar social and technological pressures predispose the organs of popular government to respond in analogous ways. Thus in Britain and the US parties are thought to be moving towards sharper ideological extremes. In each "third force", however expressed, have become more explicit, in each the electorate has become more volatile.

Again wisely, in view of the limitations necessarily imposed by such an inquiry, the authors have in general contented themselves with charting the historic origins of these developments, rather than attempting to trace them to their roots in the evolution of modern British and American society. Two obvious factors, however, cry out for investigation and recur as topics for the contributors' speculation and inquiry. They are the new techniques of communication and campaigning, and the role of money in the increasingly costly game of party politics. On both sides of the Atlantic the string-pullers of politics have come a long way from their humble, almost innocent, beginnings in the management of the press and the shake-down of the well-to-do. Their working tools are now the pollster and computer, television and mass mailing. In one of the most arresting papers in this collection Larry Sabato outlines the implications that the new campaign techniques have had for the American party system. The new breed of political consultant who has mastered these skills sells them to the highest bidder and is able to use them to "replace the political party as the middleman between candidate and voter".

Moreover, attempts to strengthen the parties by legally controlling the undisciplined and unpooled influx of money into the political process have virtually failed. As Sabato points out, the Federal Election Campaign Act (the so-called FECA) of 1971 has proved to be actually harmful to the parties, by its complexity, its limits on what parties may contribute to candidates, and the way in which it obliges the national party committees to compete with their own candidates for limited fund-raising dollars. At the same time it has strengthened those increasingly dominant newcomers on the American political scene, the PACs, or political action committees, with the result that in the six years after the Act was passed the proportion of money raised by congressional candidates from PACs actually doubled.

Although touched on at several points in Bogdanor's collection, it is most directly in the assorted papers in Malbin's *Money and Politics in the United States* that the far from simple correlations (and non-correlations) in this superficially sensational area are examined. The sensation-hunter will in fact find little in these closely packed pages; what serious inquirers will discover is a most carefully argued and documented analysis of the relationship between the political dollar, the law that seeks to regulate it, the institutions (parties, PACs etc) that use it and the effects that each has on the other and on American institutions generally. Although covering a diversity of topics, the papers (particularly Malbin's own) add up to a surprisingly comprehensive survey of present conditions in this fast-changing scene. No student of American party politics can afford to ignore their findings. They are supported by masses of statistical and financial evidence, fully annotated (though not, alas, footnoted), and admirably indexed.

Their cool assessment of what the vastly increased influx of money is actually doing to American politics throws up one highly significant fact: the dollar is not neutral. Gross disparities may exist between party and party, or between parties and pressure groups, but dollar for dollar the rich do less well than the poor, the challenger benefits more than the incumbent. Consequently, artificially imposed spending limits tend to favour an already too well entrenched set of office-holders.

This was hardly what the reformers intended. But, as Malbin and his colleagues overwhelmingly demonstrate, the legal reforms in this area have not only proved persistently inadequate; they have also had a range of wholly unintended consequences. Designed to weaken the political role of special interests they seem to have created a situation in which those interests are more vigorous and potent than they were before. What has happened is that as fast as lawyers drafted the reforms, other lawyers, either as judges or as political consultants, found or picked holes in them. And always behind every attempt at legislative control loomed the awesome spectre of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press".

Legally speaking, you never step twice into

the same United States, and the more the law is elaborated to frustrate every impropriety the more it arouses the suspicions of the bench and challenges the ingenuity of its intended victims. Indeed what most strikes the British observer in all this is the fantastic complexity of the American electoral law, its costliness and its self-generating litigation and bureaucracy. Is it worth it? One cannot help asking.

One thing is certain. The game as prescribed, with its intricate, ever-changing rules and strategies, is no sport for amateurs. Even the most modest electoral venture demands high expenditure and imposes heavy rules. Costly law and costly technology thus combine to favour the big battalions. This is where the parties, seemingly despised by the voters and cavalierly treated by the candidates, have made their most dramatic come-back. They can collect and distribute money, expertise and services, providing a continuity which transcends that of the most popular individual candidate, enjoying the economies of scale and providing a focus for effort which may not be charismatic but is certainly effective.

Of course as one contemplates the new phoenix one cannot restrain some anxiety about the implications of its enhanced vitality. In 1979-80 the Republican national party raised over \$130 million, more than half by a mass mailing operation of considerable sophistication aided by a congressional subsidy. At headquarters it employed some 400 staff and in the field operated a network of ancillary offices. It went out to recruit candidates, to train them in seminars and "workshops", to provide them with technical services of every kind and finally to offer direct financial support. This is a far cry from local boss control and doorbell-ringing. It is centralization, coordination, nationalization—the shape of American politics to come.

So is it premature to sing the death of party? Martin P. Wattenberg's *Decline of American Parties* seeks to provide an answer from the findings of the public-opinion polls. He translates his statistics into some of the most vilely

fractured prose that even this notoriously illiterate branch of political science can throw up, but his conclusions are not without interest. He asserts that the flight of the voter from the party reflects not a hostility but a neutrality, a feeling that the parties are no longer "relevant in solving the most important domestic and political issues of the day". The candidate now stands apart from his party, using it rather than supporting it, an attitude that the modern media, especially television, by their very nature encourage and perpetuate.

It is the logical conclusion of this plastic party politics, media-oriented, issue-indifferent, consultant-managed, that Roland Perry presents in *The Programming of the President*. A novelist is hardly to be held to the strict accountability of a historian, so if Mr Perry claims to inform us even of when his characters stroke their beards or drink their coffee we must not necessarily disbelieve the verbatim conversations of the great with which his pages are peppered. What we have is a chatty, inside, dramatized account of the way in which the new campaign technology was applied in the Carter-Reagan contest—that, and some incidents of "programmed" politics when Reagan reached the White House. His heroes are the stage directors, Richard Wirthlin, the dedicated Mormon—the Latter-Day Saints loom large, and rightly, in Perry's story—and Patrick Caddell, Harvard by education, Southerner by adoption. These are the practitioners of the new wizardries. Reagan and Carter are the puppets. The script is out of polling data by computer. The drama derives from the competition in assimilating your puppet's behaviour to what the public mood demands, as established by incessant "in-depth" analysis regardless of expense and entirely without regard to any political principles. It is not wholly fact, but it is very far from pure fiction. It has an only too obvious relevance to this autumn's contest, when once again Wirthlin will be in charge of the Champion. Poor Patrick Caddell; he programmed Gary Hart.

WILLIAM BOYD

Stars
and
Bars

Without doubt William Boyd's best book...the writing is immaculate...It made me laugh out loud'

John Nicholson *The Times*

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The poet's whirl

Joanna Motion

ANITA DESAI
In Custody
204pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
0434 18635X

Strong, self-reliant women have been at the centre of Anita Desai's earlier books. Around them have dithered a collection of lesser mortals: beached by the shifts of their lives, they are victims whose responses are passive, saved by a retreat into drunkenness or silence or garrulity – Aunt Mira and Baba in *Clear Light of Day*, Ila Das in *Fire on the Mountain*. Making the places these helpless creatures inhabit seem more than backwaters is one of Desai's considerable strengths.

In *Custody*, her latest novel, moves to the edges of her characteristic territory. We no longer offered such engaging portraits as those of the competent, solitary Bim and Nanda Kauf. Here, the attention is all on muddling, shabby humanity. At the same time Desai has altered the focus from a predominantly female world to a matter-of-factly male one.

Deven is a temporary lecturer, a married man. In his head the poetry soars but his mean-spirited daily life has him earth-bound. He teaches Hindi, when his first love is Urdu, in a small private college in a dehydrated town near Delhi. Nothing belonging to him is the result of his active choice – certainly not his sulky wife nor the place where he lives nor his subject. Dully he waits for confirmation in his appointment, for his provident fund and medical allowance and his pension. He waits, in a vague kind of way, for a miracle. The chance of transformation comes when Deven is asked by a dubious friend from school days to interview an Urdu poet, Nur Shahjehanabadi, for his magazine. The name of this revered figure goes forward to the Nobel committee annually, but he has written nothing for fifteen years. Deven's ascent to meet Nur for the first time in his top floor room is a transfiguration.

It is to him that God had leaped over a cloud and called for him to come up, and angels might have been drawing him up these ancient splintered stairs to meet the deity; so jubilantly, so timorously, so gratefully did he rise. This, surely, was the summons for which he had been waiting all these empty years, only he had not known it would assume this form. In his mortal myopia and stupidity, he had expected it to come from Sarla when he married her, or from the head of department at his college who alone could promote and demote and alter his situation in life, or even from Murad who, after all, lived in the metropolis and edited a magazine.

But Deven cannot maintain that plane. Nur is an object of veneration but immensely disillusioning in himself. Swarmed over by parasites he has no wish to be rescued from, a connoisseur in his youth not only of delicate verse sequences but of wrestling and brothels and pigeon-fancying, he appears now as "a pathetic old cushion that spilt out old stale cotton". The admiring, horrified Deven, seeking his guru, finds himself wiping up the poet's vomit with the nearest bits of paper. It only occurs to him afterwards that he may have recycled deathless manuscripts for the purpose. For the rest of the book Deven struggles to come to terms with the recognition that great art is impure. It comes in a messy package with weakness, crudeness, bullying and a passion for bribery. The real devotee cannot be fastidious. The explicit expression of the indisolubility of poetry from prose comes in Deven's amateurish attempts to record Nur's utterance on tape. Deven, who scarcely knows how to turn on a radio, is assisted by an equally incompetent boy, the salesman's inevitable nephew, who dismisses the recording sessions scornfully as "poetry-theory". Between them they play a fumbling game of hide-and-seek trying to capture Nur's greatness, which he has entangled in a background of bazaar sounds, reminiscences and fervent recitations of Keats.

The recording sessions are painful to read. Deven's life whirls out of control like a pool wound beyond its end. Debt and obligations which he has no means of repaying descend on his head – and he a man who buys his cigarettes in twos. Nur starts to hold him responsible for the practicalities of his life. Every apparent solution Deven stumbles into turns out to be the entrance to a fresh catastrophe. Through

a crescendo of impossible heat, Deven decides amid the disintegration of his own life to stop running away. He actively agrees to take on the problem and the glory of Nur, to sign for the whole package. In effect, he exchanges one kind of imprisonment – to Sarla, to the college, to provincial life – for a wider but subtler one. The custodial sentence is mutual: in return for entering the cage, Deven becomes guardian of the great poet's work.

In *Custody* is Anita Desai's most subtle and mature work to date. It is handled with her familiar elegance. She retains an unforced and powerful ease in conveying the colour and sounds and sensations of Indian life, but she devotes these skills to a newly bleak end. In *Custody* lacks the warm charm of *Clear Light of Day*, but it is tougher and tauter.

An unsentimental tenderness is the hallmark of her earlier books; there is none of that here. Apart from the peculiar, mixed passion of disciple for guru, the characters of *In Custody* are barely involved in any caring association, even though the amount of traffic between people is in marked contrast to the prevailing solitude in Desai's first books. Murad, the magazine editor, appears as Deven's old friend on the first page of the novel but he is undressed in a witty and clear-eyed analysis as merely an operator. Deven's colleague who lectures in Urdu seems a representative of higher values in the dismal world of the college, holding out promises of understanding and support, but he dissolves into egotistical decadence. Desai is even-handed with Deven too. Although his uncoping life invites our sympathy, he is sometimes agonizingly feeble in relation to Nur, and too precarious in his hold on confidence to risk generosity even to his wife.

Deven's treatment of Sarla and of Nur's ambitious second wife have something in common. Locked into a hierarchy of authority and prejudice which generates obligatory abuse, he literally cannot afford to let them speak. He doesn't bother to open a letter from his wife and refuses to read one from the Begum, tearing up the poetry – her own verses – that she encloses. Within the masculine cast of the book, Anita Desai seems fleetingly to suggest that there are other stories to be told here, or alternative versions of the same story, if the emphases were otherwise, if the men would permit it.

Sarla's unread letter, no doubt written in lumpy Hindi, contained commonplace information about train times. The Begum's, crammed with articulate passion, is expressed in elegant and florid Urdu. The uneasy relation between Urdu and Hindi which Desai began to explore in *Clear Light of Day* has a central part to play in her new novel. For Deven and for Nur the enchantment and romance of poetry depend on the Urdu language, and within India the language is doomed by politics – by the partition of the country. Even someone of Nur's stature can no longer produce a "lion roar" of Urdu to mount the language's revenge on its circumstances – he simply orders more kebabs. The language to do business in, for poets as for everyone else, is Hindi.

There is a danger built into the exploration of this linguistic opposition in a novel whose medium is English, since both elements have to be expressed in translation; it's a risk which, for the most part, Anita Desai rides admirably. Urdu marooned by Hindi, poetry alongside physics, the enduring contained by the new-fangled: Desai leaps the partners up against each other. The tension they create is productive; while the author is too wise to accord more than a half-hearted blessing to any party.

These issues and conflicts are far-reaching ones, capable of sustaining a "lion roar" in poetry or prose. But bellowing is hardly Desai's style. If *In Custody* covers rougher and more ambitious terrain than her other novels and stories to date, and represents a more sombre viewpoint, its voice is still a quiet one. Anita Desai is building up an impressive achievement – and two out of three novels reaching the Booker shortlist is strikingly good going. She deserves the attention of a wide readership but her audience should be prepared to find the pleasures of her work in subtle tones and domestic contexts.

From dream to dread

James Campbell

NORMAN MAILER
Tough Guys Don't Dance
231pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.
078181 2454 5

Timothy Madden, hard drinker, would-be writer, amateur nude photographer, lately deserted by the wife he first met at a swap, wakes up one morning to the familiar hangover plus a nagging suspicion that he may have murdered a woman the night before, if not two (the optional one being the deserter). The women have disappeared, the inside of Madden's car is covered in blood, and buried in his private marijuana patch he finds a severed head which he can look upon long enough only to remark that, like both the missing ladies, it is blonde. Which, if either, is it? and whodunit?

As the opening to a thriller, this is promising. But Norman Mailer has trouble with plots, as he admitted during an interview with me in 1983. "They never come naturally to me. I have to work them out bit by bit, and eke them out." For that reason, it has been noted, his talent is less well suited to fiction than to journalism, where the narrative procedure is often fixed by the course of actual events. The book which best illustrates this talent at work is *The Executioner's Song*, which Mailer, however – unhappy at being merely America's finest journalist – attempted to disguise as "A True Life Novel".

Tough Guys Don't Dance shows how that old plot trouble continues to worry him. After the first chapter, which has Madden musing on the first pilgrims who landed nearby, and comparing their hopes with his own deeds (which once earned him a spell in prison), the story lumbers from step to step with little sense of its own direction. Clumsy coincidences move it on, as much as sudden recollections of hidden clues and the introduction of important new characters late in the game. By these means, Madden pieces together the fragments of his nightmare, and his creator attempts to suggest how it might be part of a greater dread which has clouded the American Dream for good.

The novel of that name was Mailer's last attempt to write in what the blurb-writer calls his "tough, raw, uncompromising style". As

there, the cast in *Tough Guys Don't Dance* consists mainly of blondes ("angels or bitches"), faggots, and men who are "as powerful as a Kodiak bear"; the bar-room jokes prove once and for all that a sense of humour has no place in a tough guy's armoury, and the sexual element is puerile, even by Mailer's standards: black men have big penises; one character likes to urinate on his wife while video-taping the performance which he then shows publicly; another says "I honour you because you are man enough to fuck your wife". Everybody seems to have slept with everyone else's wife, though they don't always remember having done so. "Despair", aphorizes Madden, "is the emotion we feel at the death of beings in us."

Or at the collapse of the writer in us. How can Mailer write as badly as this? "Although Patty Lareine was trim to bursting in her build, peppy as a spice jar, he modulated the mode of her personality down to more delicate herbs". One reason must be the much-repeated publicity item of the great number of wives and children he is obliged to clothe and feed, but the deeper affliction is one which he has suffered since the start of his career: Mailer is corrupted by his own brilliance. No other American writer of his generation informs his writing with such a rich fund of ideas, yet Mailer is frequently seduced by a thought before it has been tested. In the writing of fiction this has proved to be disabling.

Tough Guys Don't Dance provides new skin for a lot of old anxieties, familiar from previous novels and from the essays (which is their proper home): the relationship between social behaviour and cancer; the action of man on earth influencing the struggle between God and Satan; plus many existentialist speculations. This hints at Madden's greatest flaw as a literary creation, which is that he has no narrative voice separate from that of his creator. And there are other similarities: both are writers, boxing aficionados, woman hunters, heavy drinkers, drug takers (formerly, in the creator's case), familiar with life in prison, and liable to attack their wives. Madden is not Mailer, certainly, but Mailer is charmed by what he claims to deplore, and cannot resist the murky atmosphere of Madden's mind. In attempting to moralize over it, he has succeeded only in adding to the round of dirty jokes.

Teething troubles

David Montrose

WOLF MANKOWITZ
The Devil In Texas
Illustrated by Ralph Steadman
222pp. Robert Royce, 93, Bedwardine Road, London SE19 3AY. £8.95.
0947728015

Comic novels that bring together an American campus and a visiting English academic arouse expectations of the familiar; encouragingly, though, Wolf Mankowitz gives early indications that he might avoid at least some of the roads travelled by the likes of Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge. Dr Oliver Stanley – a theology don at St Paraclete's, Cambridge – is approaching the end of a year's research fellowship at the huge and wealthy University of Longhorn, Texas. A specialist in "Gnostic heresies, diabolistic cults, and other oddments of Christian history", Stanley has been enquiring into the lineage of a Hungarian vampire who emigrated to Texas in the nineteenth century.

By the start of the novel, he has discovered that descendants of the vampire dominate local economic and social life. Anxious to forestall unwelcome publicity, these luminaries hatch a plot – in which material and supernatural forces combine – to induce the corruptible Stanley to suppress his findings. The Faustian reward for burying his paper on the vampire is a lucrative post in a new Dynamic Diabolism programme which aims to bring Americans back to God by revitalizing their awareness of the Devil. Prominent among Stanley's fringe benefits are the carnal attentions of his Helen of Troy, Lili. Unknown to his benefactors, though, Stanley has secreted a duplicate

of the paper in a safety-deposit box.

At this point, unfortunately, the novel takes a turn for the conventional. Elements of soft-edged satire have been present from the outset. Now, they become paramount, with Stanley encountering one aspect of Texan mores after another: fundamentalist religion, cultural insularity, rampant materialism, macho masculinity, hot chili and frozen marlinas. . . .

Diverting moments do result, but from the process of manipulating stereotypes rather than through a flowering of incipient bizarro. The story-line regains its primacy only in the later stages, when the local bigwigs learn that Stanley – by virtue of the marriage of a distant ancestor to a Red Indian princess – has claims on former tribal land around Longhorn: their land. Rejected by Lupa, his contract abruptly terminated, his life similarly threatened, Stanley is eventually bought off a second time, trading his claims and the copyright of his vampire paper for funds to establish an emeritus professorship in Reborn Christianity for himself at St Paraclete's.

This closing flurry of action, though, never quite recaptures the novel's earlier impetus; and so a promising idea never achieves take-off. The jacket illustration apart, Ralph Steadman's contributions take their lead from Mankowitz's depictions of Texan society, employing lenient caricature more than the inspired grotesquerie of Steadman's work with Hunter S. Thompson.

Beginning on October 30, King's College London will be presenting a series of public lectures, on Tuesday evenings at 6.15 pm, under the title "The Novel". The series will deal with Flaubert, Zola, Henry James, James Joyce, Eça de Queiroz, Machado de Assis, Fontana, Kafka, Gide, Proust, Galileo and García Márquez.

Unheavenly quires

Galen Strawson

PENELOPE LIVELY
According to Mark
218pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
0434 42742 X

According to Mark is no gospel, Mark Lamming is no saint. He is an insipid man of letters writing an insipid biography of another insipid man of letters called Gilbert Strong, c1880-1960, friend of Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy, "sort of on the edges of . . . Vanessa and Roger and Duncan and Virginia and all that crew", author of biographies, travel books, novels, essays.

Gilbert Strong is not meant to be insipid, but Penelope Lively's attempts to convince us that he is an interesting man are unsuccessful. She herself is writing a novel about a biographer, but the worthy thoughts on fiction and biography that she attributes to Strong are a compound of falsehood, dubiety and truly stunning banality:

The novelist recounts as much of what happened as is appropriate or pertinent. He leaves out what is either unnecessary (to the plot and to the theme) or what would distract. In other words, the silences of the novel are not lies but rejection of extraneous matter. Only those conversations are reported which are relevant; only those actions that have some bearing on what is going on. . . . The biographer does something entirely different. He is aware of the existence of a "true" account of what happened to the subject; everything conspires to conceal this from him. His job is to pursue this so-called "truth" – which is itself unattainable. His lies and silences are therefore his areas of failure, the points at which he is obliged either to speculate or simply to omit. All he can produce is an account which is dependent upon the energy with which he has pursued his researches and

The artful lodger

Patricia Craig

CAROLINE BLACKWOOD
Corrigan
279pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
0434 07467 5

After writing a couple of virtually plotless novels, Caroline Blackwood suddenly produced *The Fate of Mary Rose*, which tells an engrossing story. Corrigan, too, could hardly be more satisfactorily constructed, as far as riveting the attention is concerned. It is, however, considerably more amiable in feeling than its predecessor.

Corrigan is a talkative Irishman who bowls about the countryside in a wheelchair, raising funds for the disabled. Or is he? It's clear from the beginning that Corrigan's activities will not bear examination. Is he merely a confidence trickster, or are things less clear-cut than this simple explanation suggests? Of all the possible themes available to her, following on from the scenario she has devised, Blackwood has opted for the subtlest, allowing all kinds of benefits to her characters, moral, psychological and even financial, to accrue in circuitous ways.

Corrigan, a novel – you might say – about crippling conditions and impostures, opens mildly enough. Corrigan turns up in Coombe Abbot, full of missionary eloquence, and proceeds to captivate an elderly lady whom he finds wallowing in a trough of widowhood. He starts by taking Mrs Blunt to task for neglecting her reading, mentioning the inadequacy of the library at his own hospital, St Crispin's, and planting in her mind the idea that she should make herself personally responsible for replenishing it. He skillfully represents this lady to herself as a benefactor of intelligent parables; and isn't content to leave it at that. Mrs Blunt, previously a helpless, pretty, insipid old lady, loses no time in acquiring a driving licence, a van, a lot of land on which to set up a market gardening enterprise for the benefit of St Crispin's, some literary knowledge, considerable expertise in the spotting of saleable antiques at local auctions, and the will to exploit her own talent for flower painting. She also acquires Corrigan as a lodger, at the expense of disfiguring her decorative period house to accommodate his disability.

The transformation of Mrs Blunt, each stage of which is relayed to her dismayed daughter in

the manner in which he has chosen to interpret what he has learned.

Poor old Lamming: quire after quire after quire.

Poor old Lamming researches his way to Dean Close, Strong's house in Dorset. Strong's granddaughter Carrie, shy, deflective, emotionally self-sufficient, runs the place as a Garden Centre. Lamming, who loves his wife Diana, falls for Carrie. He declares himself and propels the unwilling girl in the direction of the Dordogne to visit her mother Hermione, whose reminiscences he wishes to record for a radio broadcast. Carrie, dismayed, sleeps with him on the way down, anxious not to offend, hoping his infatuation – she regards it as some sort of viral infection – will soon clear up.

Hermione the ghastly lives with a self-made yob near Sarlat, and the story accelerates into light fare. The tape recorder turns, Hermione lies copiously about her father. Diana turns up, antennae out. Carrie and Mark are discovered. Carrie is greatly relieved. But then she is coerced into touring France with the uncomfortable couple, and runs away to Paris, where she instantly falls in love with someone called Nick. Mark's gloom deepens. Diana reckons something is really wrong, because Carrie is "not his type" (she, Diana, is his type). Clearly, Mark needs to see a therapist. And so they go back to England, and Mark goes on with his uninspiring book, and Lively goes on with hers.

According to Mark is impeccably routine and startlingly ill-written. Lively treats the English language as the undamnable vehicle for story, and punishes it with brutal, unerring inelegance. Most of her sentences are just lumpy information-containers, especially in the early part of the book, where scene-

setting notes, portioned into paragraph-sized blocks, are hoisted onto the page. Others are so clumsy that they take some time to construe; and at least one is incomprehensible ("Your own doings were interwoven with the coarser and more indestructible fabric of history, to give the movement of time a grander name than it seems to deserve when one is part of it. And yet how unspeakably much more so it might be – had been indeed for countless millions of people in this century.")

Heinemann describe *According to Mark* as "superbly crafted", like a saucepan in a Sunday supplement. But Lively's use of individual words is careless and inaccurate. The glimmer of a neon sign pulses over the roof tops. Even if one can be said to hear Muzak on the radio, it certainly does not chatter. Nor can a man become an academic willy-nilly, if he has to work hard to do so. Nor do cars rustle, passing in the night.

The author is hasty, the copy-editors sleep, and none of this is good. But there is worse. It is not the pot-boiling story, which boils along quite nicely. It is not the ugly sentence construction, or the archaic inversions, or the plonking of the background theme – "What is truth? Different people experience reality in different ways". It is not that Mark Lamming is stupendously charmless, secondhand, a man who fails to have a single interesting thought for over 200 pages, a man in whom culture operates like an old-fashioned television commercial, and consists of a perpetual triggering of maximally corny associations. It is something to do with the consistency and believability of the characters.

Consistency is not a simple matter. Brigands can turn into saints, and be just the same deep down. Dostoevsky can convince us that public prosecutor Ippolit Kirilovich is "vain and irritable, though extremely intelligent and, indeed, kind-hearted". People can be consistently inconsistent. The problem with Lively's characters is different. In a way they seem real enough; most of them are stereotypical, but

the types are real. They lack depth, they lack any proper complexity, but they seem to represent, in two dimensions, people that could exist in three. Carrie as first described, cheerful, absent, secure in her highly developed emotional neutrality, is rather well conceived. But then doubts set in. Diana, for example, is presented as a clever, speedy, hyper-efficient, agreeably slangy woman. We understand that she has a certain wisdom in human affairs. But then she reacts with profound insensitivity and emotional miserliness to her husband's infatuation. Our understanding of her character is overturned, and does not recover. Carrie's instant entry into love is similarly implausible; it is not explained by her troubled circumstances. It is not believable. Mark is consistent in his dreariness, but when Lively tells us that he loves his wife, it is not clear how. The evidence of the book is against it (though not because he has an affair). It is equally hard to believe that Diana loves him. The pressures of incredulity mount; the characters begin to come apart; the book as a whole loses grip.

"The novelist", writes Strong, "has an infinity of choices. He chooses what is to happen, to whom it happens, and in what way he will relate what happens. When he says 'This is the story and the whole story' we must accept it." But Strong is wrong. Some choices rule out others. Principles of consistency operate. Characters are created and options contract fruitfully. Nor do we have to accept what the novelist says. We can point out that it is inconsistent, and argue that it fails. We can recommend it for a two-and-a-half-hour train journey and condemn it as a work of literature.

David Lodge's *Language of Fiction: Essays in criticism and verbal analysis of the English novel*, first published in 1966 and reprinted in 1979, is now available in an expanded paperback edition, with a new "Afterword to the second edition" (297pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £4.95. 0 7102 0238 5).



Toynbee Hall

The First Hundred Years

ASA BRIGGS and ANNE MACARTNEY

Written for the centenary of Toynbee Hall, this study looks at the patterns of poverty, deprivation, squalor and racial separation which are as characteristic of the area around Toynbee Hall today as they were in 1884.

0 7102 0283 0, 265pp, illustrated £15.00, publication 8th October

Goering: The 'Iron Man'

R J OVERY

'Richard Overy, who has established himself as this country's leading expert of the younger generation on matters Nazi, has written a book that explores not just the facts of the air war, but their implications for our understanding of National Socialism. . . . Overy's is the richest book on this whole subject that I have read for a long time.' – Norman Stone, *Sunday Times*

0 7100 9783 2, 300pp, illustrated £14.95, publication 4th October

Routledge & Kegan Paul
14 Leicester Square, London WC2

RKP

Cat and mousse

Barbara Hardy

SHENA MACKAY
A Dow of Cherries
217pp. Brighton: Harvester Press. £8.95.
0710806752

This is a comic moral tale, slapdash in some ways, artful in others. Its comedy doesn't aspire to wit, but it is packed with jokes and farce, for example its deeply enjoyable criticism of the media's literary establishments. The characters are dotty, inventive, very nice or very nasty, all generously endowed with creativity and humour, which tends to blur their edges from time to time. For instance, Julian, dull husband and philistine estate agent, keen on picture windows, fitted kitchens, and immaculate bathroom tiles, feels put down by his sophisticated in-laws but unbelievably mutters "Lilies that feaster". When his wife Daisy laughs about her Betsy Tronwood role, on the other hand, the Dickensian references are warm and funny, unlike most obligatory lit. crit. chat in novels. The characters are created through vivid conceits, dreams, and bizarre events; images, visions and stories proliferate. They trigger off each other's fantasies with the drop of a phrase, and they tell jokes, some good because they're good, some because they're bad.

After a sticky start, heavily descriptive and figurative, the novel springs into life with dialogue. Natural speech is its strong point. Shena Mackay has a Pinterish ear for the way people talk, though there is nothing mimetically realistic about the diffused brilliance of her humour. She knows that conversation consists of soliloquy tangled with colloquy. Most novelists write dialogue which is stichomythia in disguise, with characters stiffly staring each other in the face and interviewing each other. Mackay characters talk like this when they are embarrassed by social situations, but for the most part the dialogue rambles, bends, stops and starts, forgets and retrieves. "They're a sort of faris" says Daisy some time after Shema asks her what quiches are, and his reply, "They sound it" attaches her explanation to the subject now in hand, the other wives at the Rugby Club Supper.

Now the novelist puns, now the characters. A wife loses her emerald ring and her husband, quick as a flash, observes "Well you said you wanted to lose a stone". The speed of response is stepped up by the very light punctuation and loose syntax. The language is informal and hurried, words and clauses can't stop for commas. (There are a number of somewhat erratically placed semi-colons, perhaps to make up and sound proper).

The characters are an eccentric bunch; clusters of appurtenances; they draw on their grotesque object-world as they attack sparks off each other through speech. They do not talk in empty broadcasting studios but as they twiddle cigarettes, drink, rub knives, iron, fall over balloons, make chips and chip off tiles. Maud, a sloppy poet, describes another woman as a spent match, generating the simile as she flourishes the burnt-top and wasted white virginal wood of the match she has just struck. When the gigantic owner of the jokeshop where she lives has to console her, he pulls out not one hanky but a conjuror's string, "a red silk hanky followed by a blue one, a green one, a yellow one, a black one". She adapts easily, turning oddity into hyperbole. "Sure! It would take more than these twenty silk handkerchiefs to dry my tears". Like Alice coming to terms with Wonderland, the characters respond rapidly to each other's language, and to their fantasies. And the dreams have a habit of coming true. When someone has an apocalyptic vision, it is not, as so often, followed by anti-climax.

The environment is malignant. The rescued wasp stings as soon as it's fished out of the milk. A manuscript turns up twice, to make sure it tells its secret. The bowl of cherries does not reach its destination. The boundary between word and thing is transgressed and so is that between thing and person. There are terrible rooms, awful clothes, ghastly meals. Best of all, the dinner-party given by Daisy and Julian for the boss and his wife looms mythologically vast and farcical. Preparatory chores include mowing the lawn and painting the garden gate.

Daisy's night-before nightmare pales before the intransigence of the day itself. Her wasping and her child's accident hold out hope but aren't bad enough to cancel the party. She postpones her shopping until the reader, like the woman who interrupted Othello, longs to break into the fiction and give her a hand. The dinner dialogue moves hysterically through collisions of banal starters, "Are you going away this summer?", to exchanges about schools and gardening, though extra drinks in the kitchen put sparkle, or at least wobble, into the hostess's contributions. The menu is guaranteed to cure everyone of pre-prandial panic. It begins with a little fish mousse, the reliability of which is cast in doubt by the appearance of a supper-seeking and disconsolate cat, and proceeds to timed ratatouille, Instant Whip, and Cassis cunningly concocted

Is another

Laura Marcus

JAN ROGERS
Her Living Image
264pp. Faber. £9.95.
0571 132944

The use of shadow-figures, alter-egos and doubled characters, a literary convention with a lengthy history, is employed in Jane Rogers's *Her Living Image* in an imaginative and unusual form. Carolyn, a shy, awkward, intense eighteen-year-old, is involved in a serious car accident; she finds herself becoming indifferent and then hostile towards her clumsily dotting mother and increasingly drawn towards fellow-patient Clare. On leaving hospital, Carolyn - now Caro - escapes her parents and moves into Clare's feminist household. However, the story that Carolyn began to tell herself for comfort immediately after the accident - the story of her own life in which the accident never occurs - takes on its own momentum and begins to live itself.

The story, once started, continued though, as stories will - quite unknown to Carolyn. It featured a Carolyn no less real than herself, her double, her living image, separated from her only by a second's timing in a rainsoaked dash across Leap Lane.

While Caro engages with the difficulties of a new existence in which feminist politics govern daily living, Carolyn leaves school, becomes pregnant by her boyfriend Alan, marries and becomes a mother and housewife. The two stories alternate throughout the novel

Claret and candlesticks

J. K. L. Walker

GEORGE LASSALLE
Chasing the Chaffet
234pp. Elm Tree. £7.95.
0241 113369

The London of oyster bars, vintage Bentleys, young men in bowler hats, and black-market food; the period, that is, of post-war austerity, serves George Lassalle as the starting-point for his elegantly written farce about adventures in the antique trade. Subtitled "An apprenticeship in antiques", *Chasing the Chaffet* purports to be the tale of how a certain George Lassalle, a gentlemanly if somewhat raffish character, a one-time music publisher and magazine editor, becomes a country-town antique dealer. The author, it appears, has followed all these occupations and the reader, disregarding or not the confidently autobiographical tone, may be left to puzzle out whether the book is colourfully fictionalized reminiscence or closely informed burlesque. Critical theory need not detain him.

The town of Welkin Royal, an hour or two's drive from London, is already overstocked with antique dealers when Lassalle arrives to take indefinite possession of a rent-free Queen Anne house lent by a wartime acquaintance. Across the street lies the Jenkin's Bar and its good-looking East End landlady Bella Green-groves, who supplies him with excellent bomb-

with Gin and Ribena. Perhaps the best moment comes as Daisy panics when she realizes that she hasn't even begun to panic yet.

It is all neatly plotted, apparently naive and hand-to-mouth, but as contrived as a Victorian Providence novel, moving through slack to tension, through stress to recognition, revelation and nemesis. The nice and nasty characters are pieces in a moral chess-game. They are organized, like Dickensian characters, as doubles, opposites, alternative egos, and familial dyads. Theirs is only ostensibly a world of disarray, and proceeds neatly, securely, through apparent waywardness to moral conclusion and resolution. Perhaps this is to put the matter too seriously. We are more grateful for the jokes than for the moral pattern, though they are not totally disconnected from each other.

(Carolyn's italicized) with neither woman being aware of the other. Until - and Rogers takes some risks with her narrative here - Caro meets architect Alan, Carolyn's husband, and they begin an affair.

The issue of credibility is irrelevant, less because the novel is in any case predicated on an impossibility than as a result of the careful realism and precise prose that have been employed to build up the two disparate lives and render them wholly believable. Caro's development from introverted adolescent to independent woman is particularly convincing; Rogers shows her grappling with the ideas of the women around her, rejecting active political engagement in favour of cultivating the barren garden of the communal house in which she lives. A more partisan feminist novel might have shown the new Caro rising from the ashes of the old Carolyn and striding out towards a new life; Jane Rogers repeatedly returns to the fact that many women's lives are circumscribed by home and family, and while she portrays vividly the violence of a marriage gone sour, she is also sensitive to the workings of emotional dependence.

Her Living Image never fails to take contemporary feminism seriously, but it presents feminist arguments as complex issues rather than political tracts. The alternatives it delineates may be a little too starkly opposed - it is, after all, possible to be a "good" mother and an autonomous human being as well - and the ending, setting out a putative future is a little too pat. These are the only simplifications, though, in the novel.

damaged claret and bedtime comfort while placing his domestic affairs in the hands of Joby Danks, scrap-dealer and odd-job man, and his family. To make ends meet, Lassalle disposes of some pictures, Cipriani cherubs and Morlandesque sheep, outwitting the blue-rinsed Laetitia Throeste ("Those sheep are dirty, Mr Lassalle, and sheep are not easy to sell"), and quickly acquires a taste for the game. Brass candlesticks and willow-pattern chamber-pots clog the front room, sale-room encounters with the rougher elements and practices of the trade leave him bruised but buoyant, his life fills up with new acquaintances - the dealer Saver-nake, whom he outmanoeuvres over an illuminated miniature, the eccentric museum curator Oughcotes, Joby's daughter Ruby who fills the house with bed-and-breakfast-guests before upgrading herself to Rosamund Harcourt and taking off with the proceeds. A Saturday stall in the Portobello Road, and later at the Bernoudsey Market, mark the end of his apprenticeship and introduce a heady whiff of transatlantic tastes in portraiture - "I pay top price four pounds all round, good, bad or plain lousy. Extra for lawyers and soldiers."

Lassalle's good-humoured and worldly tone makes for agreeable reading, where a sharper cutting-edge applied to the ethical shortcomings of these particular thickets would doubtless have left only a rather dull clearing. As it is, *Chasing the Chaffet* emerges as a successful blend of not-too-innocent picaresque and an insider's view of a traditionally dodgy business.

Png pratfalls

Toby Fitton

ALAN JUDD
Short of Glory
317pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.95.
0340 346531

Alan Judd's is a highly amusing, bolsterous novel about British diplomatic life in a country transparently disguised as "Lower Africa". The basic plot is thin enough, revolving round the efforts of a new recruit, Clifford Stubbs, to trace his predecessor, who decamped suddenly from the Embassy in "Battenburg". The pratfalls of an accident-prone *ingénu* in Africa are familiar from Evelyn Waugh, William Boyd and others, but this is a distinguished addition to the genre. The Lower Africa setting allows the humorous theme to deepen from a romp often not far removed from Tom Sharpe into a more penetrating comedy.

The search for the missing diplomat produces for Stubbs a cloak-and-dagger shadow from his own side, coarse almost beyond belief, representing the Lost and Found department; there is also a further shadow from the Lower African police, another brute with whom Stubbs comes to share, briefly and antagonistically, an agreeable mistress. Among the minor characters is a university girlfriend of Stubbs's, now a BBC trainee, progressive but still capable of making a hit with the Lost and Found man, who describes her (accurately) as an "upper middle class leftie with a conscience as big as her boobs". The presence of a local police officer and the BBC girl make it inevitable that, even more than usual in Lower African Life, politics will keep intruding, especially at a certain stage of inebriation.

The Embassy is staffed by what the Lower African policeman charged with the protection of the "dips" describes as "wet-arsed old women". They waste a lot of energy on petty office politics, and there is a good deal of excellent knockabout fun with dismal private parties (ENSA-style entertainments) or housing regulations: double beds are not allowed to single personnel ("unless you find a wife to put in it - one of your own I mean", the office tennant explains grimly). This team is headed by his myopic, gawky, eccentric, but far from stupid Excellency, Sir Wilfrid Eagles, a joke ambassador guaranteed to muddle any business and forget to order catering for a large buffet lunch, but never to be underestimated. "The essence of good diplomatic drafting is where possible to avoid saying anything that admits of only one meaning", he remarks to Stubbs; "That's why good diplomatic drafting is bad, but you have yet to learn that, fortunately."

Some of the author's touches are too predictable. Seat Stubbs near a swimming pool and he is bound to tumble backwards; dress a rodded Embassy wife in a diaphanous frock with no underwear and the garden party is bound to be washed out by a sudden storm. The catastrophe of a minor ministerial visit can be seen miles ahead, the lifts of the Embassy tower yo-yoing as in a comedy film (though there is also a small affray in "Kuweto", the neighbouring black township). Sir Wilfrid, addressing a business lunch, brings the wrong papers out of his teeming pockets and happens to read the draft of a confidential letter in the middle of a commercial oration. This also could perhaps have been seen coming, but Judd is canny enough to point out that the audience was so stupefied that no one noticed anything untoward.

The dénouement is well contrived, several strands brought together to produce the greatest possible personal and diplomatic embarrassment. It has long been obvious that Stubbs was unlikely to last out the whole four years of his tour of duty, but the events leading to his departure - a dawn flight out before the "png" (*persona non grata*) notice arrives - are ingeniously managed. Stubbs is not, even after his misadventures, to be permanently lost to the Service, although Third World postings will be impossible for the rest of his career. "They'll probably keep you in London for a few years," says the wise and sympathetic Sir Wilfrid at the farewell interview. "Then send you somewhere harmless like Moscow. The Russians will look after you."

With pictures in mind

Alastair Fowler

NORMAN K. FARMER
Poets and the Visual Arts in Renaissance England
122pp. Austin: University of Texas Press.
\$19.95.
0292 787111

Ut pictura poesis. Since Horace's phrase began its brilliant career of creative misinterpretation, it has disclosed a bewildering variety of contents, many of them of moment for the development of poetry, but few followed out by historians into their full literary implications. In the Renaissance, as is well known, poetry and visual art had what Dryden called "a wonderful affinity", which was often validated in terms of Neoplatonic aesthetic theory. Visual art at its highest "spoke" ideas of higher-order images, just as these were represented in the pictures "painted" by poetic words. But what characterized the changing affinity between the sister arts in that particular period? How visual were poetry's images? And what exactly were the parallels (to fill the *ut* out a little) between poetry and painting? In the course of the centuries the parallels have changed orientation very considerably; and a virtue of Norman Farmer's book is his firm grasp of the main Renaissance direction - that the principal connections then lay between physical colours and rhetorical "colours" (figures); or between *dispositio* in the sense of design and in the sense of arrangement of rhetorical parts. Another link was the iconographical image, implying a language of symbolism common to both arts in that period - unlike others more recent.

During the late sixteenth century, Neoplatonic conceptions of art had much influence, and found reflection in an abundance of ephrastic passages and iconographical images in the poetry of Spenser and Drayton and in Sidney's *Arcadia*. In the *Arcadia* (and especially the *New Arcadia*), where the sister arts' emulation of nature constitutes a main theme, the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine receives particularly elaborate expression. As Farmer shows, the structure of a chapter may follow that of the parts of an emblem: picture, poem and explanatory narrative. Or a series of visual objects, notably the paintings at Kalendar's house, will be expressively described - perhaps at a length that many modern readers find too great for their attention spans. Such series (like that of Sidney's *Impress*, or of Shakespeare's in *Pericles* II.ii, or of the tapestries at Spenser's House of Bustrane) are highly characteristic of the period. But they are fully interesting only when their sequence and iconography can be appreciated - aspects that Farmer treats a little cursorily. We need to understand in what sense Kalendar's portraits culminate with those of

Parthenia, the compassionate Urania and Zelmene.

A high point of ephrasis was reached in the 1580s and 90s. During the mannerist phase, in fact, the arts in many ways came to the perigee of their mutual approach. Later the relationship declined into mere connoisseurship, and poets increasingly attempted painterly effects inappropriate to their own medium. This is not, however, Farmer's emphasis. He ignores Spenser and Drayton and Daniel's masques (to say nothing of highly relevant minor figures such as Abraham Fraunce), and places his emphasis firmly on the baroque period. Elizabethan mannerism would have offered many more interesting passages of picturing. Some of these, for example, are introduced in a characteristic way that amounts to a form of digression. With an unexpectedness and complexity reminiscent at times of Claude Simon's, Elizabethan descriptions are often presented inset, so as to give the effects of framing beloved of mannerists. It is the literary equivalent, almost, of strapwork.

For some time we have tended to assume that the significant thing about Renaissance imagery is its iconographical differentiation, to almost any degree of detail; and it is just possible that this tendency, beneficial though it has been, is now sometimes embraced too automatically. At any rate, Farmer has chosen a more loosely iconographic approach - concentrating less on the exact significance of images than on which pictures or ideas of art poets had in mind, or on what broadly typic images they relied on their readers knowing. These connections with visual art are probably multifarious in the Renaissance; but establishing them can be a difficult business so far as method is concerned. Donne owned an art collection; yet his few mentions of the arts show no special sensitivity towards them. His epigram "Phryne" - "Thy flattering picture, Phryne, is like thee / Only in this, that you both painted be" - perhaps requires knowledge of art history (Phryne was a model of Apelles, the painter famous for his colours). All the same, its relation to visual art remains formally distant: the device is no more than literary allusion. Perhaps the subtitle of *The First Anniversaries*, *An Anatomy of the World* relies on familiarity with visual images of the anatomical theatre, with its concentric desks like planetary orbits in diagrams of the universe. Perhaps the hill of Truth in the Third Satire ("hee that will / Reach her, about must, and about must goe") relies on knowledge of the hill in the much-illustrated *Tablet of Cebes*. Unless, that is, Donne alludes to Hesiod, or Lucretius, or Xenophon, or Palingenius, or any of a score of authors who wrote about the steep path of virtue; to say nothing of artists who painted it, like Raphael in "The Dream of Scipio". In short, Farmer overstates Donne's involvement with visual art.

therefore pastoral. The *De Partu Virginis* unquestionably contains pastoral sections, as when two shepherds, Aegon and Lycidas, sing a version of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue to the newborn Christ (oddly described here as exemplifying Sannazaro's "secularizing" of Christian readings of Virgil); but Kennedy also describes as pastoral such sections as David's prophecy of the life of Christ or God's outline of the history of man. Some emphases in the book could also mislead the students for whom it seems to be primarily intended, as when the need to revive Latin is given much greater stress than its continuing currency as the language of international humanism and of other contemporary eclogues.

Kennedy's study of the texts is the fullest available in English. He includes useful information on the humanist group to which Sannazaro belonged, and a brief summary of the fearfully complicated fortunes of Naples that drove him into exile. The Reformation touched him only slightly, when Pope Leo X urged the publication of the *De Partu Virginis* as propaganda against German Protestantism; with its terminology of *den* for the Virgin, and the appearance in it of the river-god of the Jordan, one feels that it may not have worked very well. Most of the book is devoted to a general commentary on the various texts, with

the "uses of pastoral" of William J. Kennedy's title refer not to the varieties of the mode that his successors drew out of Sannazaro's writings - although nine later poets are listed in the blur, they do not figure in the text - but to the various forms within his own work. Kennedy studies not only the *Arcadia* and the piscatorial eclogues but also the Ovidian *Silvies* and the *De Partu Virginis*. Pastoral pervades everything he wrote, though Kennedy's definition makes it appear more pervasive than most readers, Renaissance or modern, would allow; from the fact that pastoral is not a genre in itself but can contain a great variety of forms, he concludes that any hybrid work is

to think of the flower epigrams as flower pieces in verse. It may be doubted, however, whether it helps much to think of the floral poems as genre landscapes, or of the Julia poems as *in-scriptive* epigrams - tattoos, perhaps? To a very marked degree, Herrick shows characteristics of baroque visual art - as for example, when he expresses a love of careless disorder in dress. Even here, though, the arts are in problematic relation; for "Delight in Disorder" imitates earlier poems, by Jean de Bonnefon and Jonson. And the taste for ugly women, reflected in Suckling and Cleveland (and in Shirley's *The Duke's Mistress*) also had an earlier literary vogue, from Berni to Shakespeare. It seems that the sister arts are far from twins, and that the beginning of literary baroque in England must be pushed back to 1600 and, in some writers, earlier still.

Throughout Britain, the emblem craze left fragmentary traces in scraps of mural painting. But no programme seems to have survived so completely as that of the painted panels of Lady Drury's Oratory, formerly at Hawstead Hall, later at Hardwick House, and now at Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich. In his only sustained excursion into detailed iconography, Farmer attempts to make sense of the programme of 68 emblematic or inscriptive panels. He scores many hits by tracing individual emblems to their probable source in Camerarius or Whitney or wherever; and he puzzles over the sequences, and their relation to the inscriptions, in an interesting way. But he lacks penetration in approaching an artist who is not only eclectic but original. Many questions remain unasked. Are the flower panels really decorative, in view of such analogues as Alcibiades' plant emblems? Could light from psychological alchemy not be brought to bear on certain of the emblems? One is left with the thought that Farmer might have done better if he had omitted this chapter altogether, and left room for another literary one, perhaps on Spenser or Drayton.

All things considered, Farmer has done well simply to encompass so wide a field, and to identify the landmarks in it - the main points at which visual art can be thought of as having repercussions on seventeenth-century poetry.

Inevitably he is often superficial; but that is less to be regretted than occasional looseness in argument or weakness of grasp. The documentation is for the most part very useful. On the art side, however, references to recent studies are sparse at times. The 117 illustrations make the volume an attractive one; although some are a little small, and the paper is not perfectly suitable for half-tone reproduction. The level of accuracy of the editing or presswork is alarmingly low, however; descending not only to frequent literal errors but to the garbling of a Jonson quotation. Perhaps the compositor was pleased with the effect of this; for he printed it twice.

In shepherd's clothing

Helen Cooper

WILLIAM J. KENNEDY
Jacopo Sannazaro and the Uses of Pastoral
238pp. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England distributed in the UK by Trevor Brown, £15.50.
087451 2689

Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, published in its authorized form in 1504, is one of the most influential works in the history of the pastoral tradition. Many readers would regard its influence as its only virtue. In the course of the Middle Ages pastoral had come to be associated with trenchant moral, religious and political polemic. Sannazaro's humanist reading of Virgil, and probably also of Giusio de' Conti (not mentioned in this book), suggested other possibilities: of the pastoral landscape as a reflection of the poet's mind, and the subject-matter (with assistance from Petrarch's *Rime*) as a state of unfulfilled longing and love-melancholy. The combination resulted in the peopling of *Arcadia* with an abundance of nymphs and shepherdesses such as had never previously appeared in the dominantly male, bucolic society. The metaphor of the shepherd world, the "other" world of pastoral, now related to the

inner world of poetic sensibility, and Sannazaro made only a perfunctory acknowledgment of the non-idyllic world of human action. Many of his successors, Sidney and Spenser among them, were to draw on both aspects, to explore the relationship between the poet and his society, the art of writing and the art of living. If Sannazaro made possible the high achievements of Renaissance pastoral, however, his separation of the mode from anything painful led ultimately to such travesties as Thomas Purney's prescription (of 1717) that the morals of pastoral "should particularly aim at regulating the Lives of Virgins and all young Persons".

The "uses of pastoral" of William J. Kennedy's title refer not to the varieties of the mode that his successors drew out of Sannazaro's writings - although nine later poets are listed in the blur, they do not figure in the text - but to the various forms within his own work. Kennedy studies not only the *Arcadia* and the piscatorial eclogues but also the Ovidian *Silvies* and the *De Partu Virginis*. Pastoral pervades everything he wrote, though Kennedy's definition makes it appear more pervasive than most readers, Renaissance or modern, would allow; from the fact that pastoral is not a genre in itself but can contain a great variety of forms, he concludes that any hybrid work is

particular stress laid on the "experimental, archaeological, and philological" aspects of Sannazaro's pastoral - the last two referring to his exploration of Virgil. The triplet is repeated throughout, with "logocentric" substituted for the last term when the discussion stresses the self-referentiality of the texts. It is, indeed, hard to find anything else in much of his work (even the *Arcadia*, despite its sections of narrative, has no coherent story), though Kennedy still sometimes strains his interpretations to extract such meanings. The main problem with a general commentary on texts like these is that it is hard to say anything specific. Modern logocentrists will be pleased to note that the mixed metaphor is alive and well:

The frame of the *Silvies* defines the speaker's personal investment in the tale as an attempt to persuade his audience of the impossibility of taking flight from one's self and one's destiny in the public arena. This frame hinges on two implied questions, both central for the Renaissance humanist: love and fame. The speaker's audience appears to have neglected the first while engaging in a single-minded pursuit of the second. He has upset a precarious balance between the two.

Milton may have said it better in *Lycidas* when Phoebus' call turns the shepherd from the temptation of sporting with Amaryllis; but perhaps without Sannazaro he would not have said it at all.

Limning the natives

Nicholas Canny

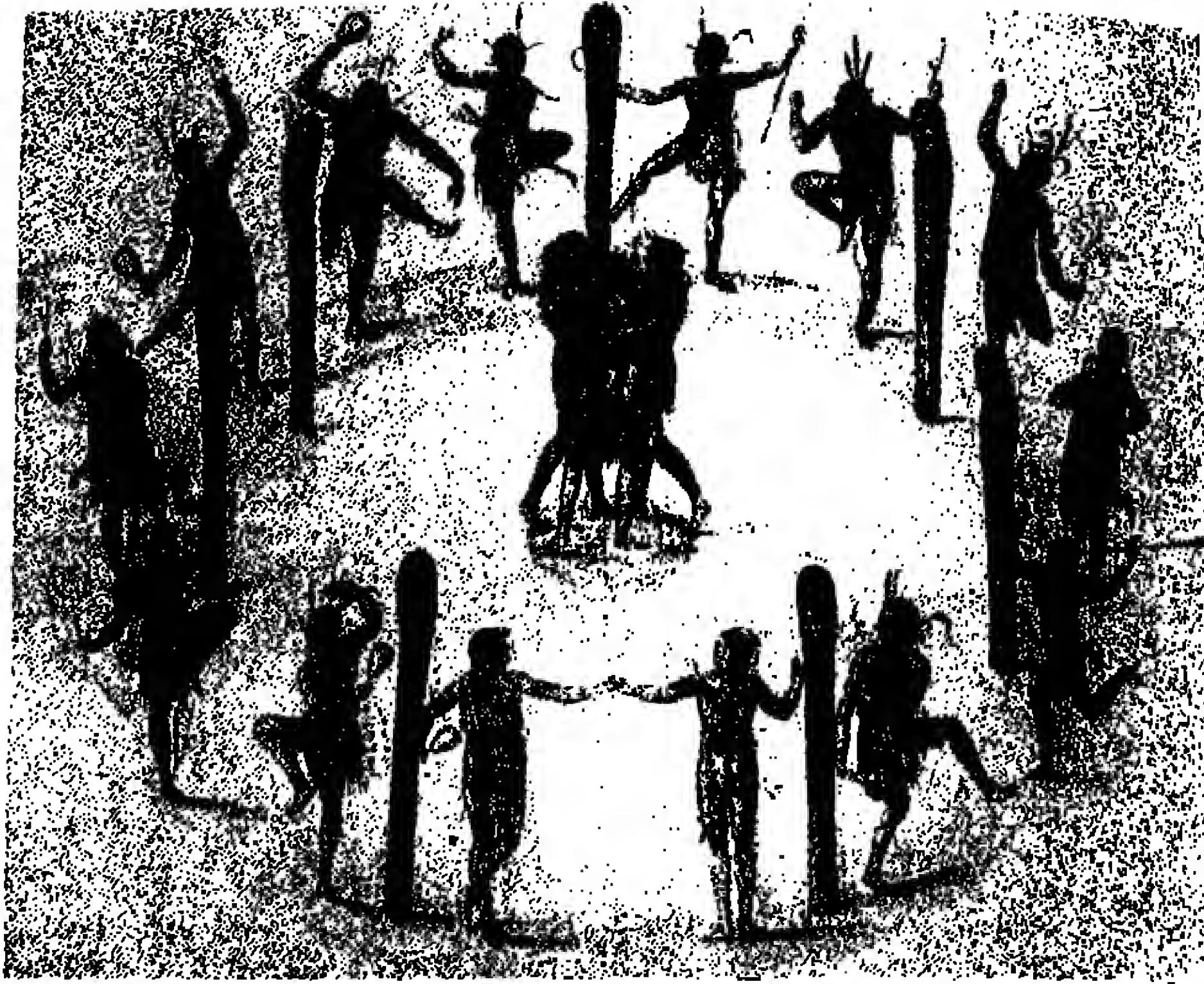
PAUL HULTON (Editor)
America 1585: The complete drawings of John White
 213pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. British Museum Publications. £16.95.
 0714107980

We know, thanks to the endeavours of Paul Hulton and D. B. Quinn, that the most authentic visual images of native Americans and their environment derive from the late-sixteenth-century English and Anglo-French expeditions to the New World and that most were the product of the combined talents of four individuals: Jacques le Moyne de Morgues, a French Huguenot artist; Theodore de Bry, a Frankfurt engraver; Thomas Harriot, an English scientist and naturalist and John White, an English artist of the brush. We also know from these earlier publications when and how the graphic record of life in native America was first assembled, how some of it was conveyed to a European public, and what each of the quartet of craftsmen contributed to the collective endeavour. The water-colour drawings of John White relating to the Roanoke expedition of 1585-6 are subjected to particularly close study in *America 1585*, which is certain to become the standard reference-book.

The illustrations in this handsome volume are drawn from three distinct sources. Seventy-seven coloured plates are reproductions of all the known surviving drawings by White; thirty-three figures in black-and-white come from the de Bry engravings published in Thomas Harriot's *Briefe and True Report of . . . Virginia* and these were based on a second set of White drawings which are now lost; and a further seventy-three black-and-white figures are reproductions of copies made of some of White's primary collection of drawings by some unknown person or persons in the early seventeenth century. The reproduction of all three versions of White's work permits the viewer to see some subjects from different angles or in

slightly different forms and Hulton draws attention to the fidelity of White's original work by showing how some of his subjects were Europeanized by his copyists or were brought by them to conform to their preconception of primitive man.

But while emphasizing the authenticity of White's work, Hulton is also able to show that it was not all of uniform standard. Those drawings that relate to the Roanoke expedition of 1585-6 are shown to be far superior to those of Eskimos executed by White when he was associated with Martin Frobisher, and superior also to White's copies of the drawings of Florida Indians made originally by Le Moyne. This superiority is attributed by Hulton to White's association in 1585-6 with Harriot, who seemingly identified the subjects to be drawn and guided White in their execution. White's sympathetic portrayal of the North Carolina Indians at work and at play is explained by Harriot's exceptionally positive attitude towards these Indians, whose world he had hoped to reveal to Europeans in a comprehensive natural history which was to have been illustrated by White. Much of the work for this study was in fact accomplished by White but the bulk of his material had been lost before his return to England in 1586, and Harriot was unable to proceed further than his *Briefe and True Report . . . of Virginia*, which was little more than a commentary upon the reproductions of those surviving White drawings that de Bry had engraved. Harriot was lost in admiration for the technology and agricultural practices of the North Carolina Indians, which he felt to be superior in certain respects to that of the English, and he contended also that these people, endowed by God with "sufficient reason to make things necessary to serve their turns", were more free from vice and avarice than the people of England. The fact that the English at this time were ambitious to succeed where the Spaniards were seen to have failed may be one explanation for Harriot's particularly humane portrayal of a primitive people, and it certainly accounts for his optimism that the Indians whom the English had encountered would "easily be brought to the knowledge of



John White's drawing of Indians dancing, reproduced from the book reviewed here. It is likely that the dance is a green corn or harvest ritual, which took place in mid-July, about the time when the colonists discovered the village of Secoton, and White did his drawings. The significance of the three women in the centre who clap each other is not known.

the gospel". But the optimism may also be explained by the fact that almost all Englishmen who associated closely with American Indians at the point of early contact recognized some merit in their social condition: Harriot was unique only in extending his tolerant view to the religious rituals of the Indians - which later writers condemned as diabolism - and the most valuable of the White drawings are consequently those associated with the religious life of the North Carolina Indians.

While due credit is given to the influence that Harriot exerted on White, the talent of the artist himself is also appraised by Hulton. The high quality of White's miniature nature studies and of his portraits suggests to Hulton that he was first trained as a limner. His map-making techniques are seen to have been of the first order, and the most remarkable feature of his art was his ability to work directly with the brush without the benefit of previous pencil drawings. But, like his English contemporaries, White was ignorant of the superior Italian techniques of anatomical drawings and his nude Indian figures are consequently disappointing. His particular skill, according to Hulton, was his ability to instill life into his

figures clothed or naked, and his most striking picture, that of the Indian dance scene, the movements of which "were no doubt entirely strange to him". Without belittling this judgment, which may have been prompted by a near-contemporary observation by Jean de Léry, one should balance it against the account of American Indian dancing given by Henry Spelman, who had spent some time as a boy among the Indians of the Chesapeake. Writing in 1613, Spelman stated that his hosts, when they met "at feasts or otherwise", used sports "much like to ours here in England as their dancing which is like our Derbyshire hornpipe".

For all that, the dancing-picture is a first-rate study and the high quality of White's work in general makes us all the more appreciative of Paul Hulton's efforts to reproduce the complete works of this neglected artist at a modest price. The only point that one would quibble with is that no mention is made of the surviving map of a portion of Raleigh's Irish estate which some have attributed to White. Hulton is clearly the man best equipped to confirm or reject this attribution, and one hopes that he will do so on another occasion.

Saving the murals

David Winfield

PAOLO and LAURA MORA with PAUL PHILIPOT
Conservation of Wall Paintings
 494pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Butterworth. £60.
 0 408 108126

It is a pleasure to note that the English translation of *La Conservation des Peintures Murales*, which was published in Italy in 1977, is easier to use than the original. Many of the errors which marred the French edition have been corrected, and the book has benefited from some reorganization and additional material. Its thirteen chapters and seven appendices contain important material for the art historian as well as for the conservator, and architects who have the care of buildings with paintings will also find it valuable.

Eight of the chapters and six of the appendices are concerned with the troubles that befall wall paintings and the choice of remedies that can be found, and it is comforting to note that the once popular practice of removing paintings from their permanent architectural setting and lending them to museums and exhibitions is now strongly discouraged. However, this leaves the conservator with the all too common problem of paintings in damp environments and these should perhaps have been a discussion of the increasingly sophis-

ticated methods of de-humidification that are now available.

The remaining five chapters are concerned with the history of wall-painting techniques and materials; and an appendix reprints many of the early sources on methods of wall painting, for the most part in the original language. The choice of source material is open to criticism, and there is a certain bias in the selection of texts to support the authors' own theories about the history of wall-painting methods. Some key chapters of Connolly's *Libro dell'Arte* have been left out, as well as Alberti's notes on wall painting. However, most of the defects which limited the usefulness of the original edition have now been remedied, although there is still no proper listing of periodicals, their publishers and their place of origin and the titles and spelling of some items in Slavonic languages are inaccurate.

This is the fourth volume to appear in the Butterworth series of conservation and the museology books. The earlier ones, *The Museum Environment* (Thomson), *Conservation of Historic Buildings* (Pellidon), *Artists' Pigments 1600-1835* (Harley) are standard reference works in their field; *The Conservation of Wall Paintings* follows the same high standards. The preservation of artefacts is a relatively new field for academic research and this book, together with its companion volumes, should provide a much needed reference library of factual information for both conservators and art historians.

Gut reactions

E. Kerr Borthwick

ANDREW BARKER (Editor)
Greek Musical Writings: Volume 1, The musician and his art
 332pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.
 0521 23593 6

"It is to music that the ancient wisdom of the Greeks seems to have been especially devoted", declares one of the learned doctors of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*. Such pride in musical achievement must puzzle those who are accustomed to acknowledge the astonishing quality of their poetic and prose literature, art and architecture, philosophy and science, and practically any branch of human culture. Would the music of *Agamemnon* or *Oedipus*, if miraculously recovered, enhance our admiration for their literary or dramatic excellence, disappoint by its feebleness, even reveal by its outlandishness? Notwithstanding the discovery on stone or papyrus of scraps of noted musical post-classical Greece, and a couple of fragments of, if not by, Euripides, it is unlikely we shall ever know. But the way music permeated Greek life is well attested in the number of vases depicting lyre or double-aulos scenes (not always obviously relevant to the theme portrayed), in countless literary references, decorative or descriptive, above all in the technical treatises and the serious criticism - usually highly ethical in tone - abounding in important philosophical writings.

A number of the shorter works in von Jan's Teubner text of *Musici Scriptores* have never been published in English translation, nor - more surprisingly - three of the longest and

most important, by Ptolemy, Porphyrius and Aristides Quintilianus, until Mathiesen's recent translation of the last-named. It is gratifying therefore that these three, and some at least of the others, are to be included in the second volume projected by Andrew Barker in the Cambridge Readings in the Literature of Music series. The present volume, however, contains more familiar material - indeed only the curious little Hibeh papyrus fragment of a diatribe against the ethical view of music is comparatively inaccessible to the persistent Greekless enquirer. The combination of the inevitable Plato (*Republic* and *Laws*), Aristotle (*Politics*) and excerpts from Athenaeus resembles such earlier musical source-reading collections as that of Strunk; but Dr Barker's selection is much more substantial, and contains generous technical annotations, with the bonus of the complete Plutarch *De Musica*, which shares with Athenaeus a wide range of references to musical instruments and techniques, performers and the history of compositional genres. Some of the Aristotelian musical *Problems* are included (though apparently the more technical ones are reserved for Volume Two), and valuable paragraphs from Theophrastus' *Historia Plantarum* on the making of aulos reeds. Barker fully discusses the types of wind and stringed instruments used by the Greeks in an introductory essay.

The classical period itself is illustrated by a selection of poetical texts from Homer, lyric (especially Pindar) and Attic drama, most of them fairly short, apart from the Homeric *Hermes Hymn*, which records how the god invented string music when he made the momentous discovery of how resonance can be

given to taut sheep-gut from the eviscerated carapace of a tortoise. The excerpts from the tragedians are divided into sections such as "frenzied mourning", "evocation of evil", etc., and, as they are fairly literally translated, the juxtaposition of so many isolated thuddings of breasts, rippings of robes, stricken heads and lyreless dirges runs into some danger of recalling irreverently Housman's celebrated parody. I note the omission of some excerpts from lost plays no less deserving of inclusion, such as the dawn chorus of nightingales, swans and shepherds' pipes in a pretty Euripidean ode from his *Phaethon* (incidentally one of only two places in extant tragedy using the musical sense of *harmonia*), or the riotous Dionysiac instrumental ensemble of Aeschylus' *Edonians*; and I miss a reference to Euripides' *Antiope*, a late play characteristically ventilating a controversial debate of the day - the contrast of the "two cultures", represented by the music-loving aesthete Amphion and his earnest, practical brother Zethus.

It is in Comedy, and in the description of entertainments in Xenophon's *Symposium*, that one gets particularly close to the musical life of classical Athens. It has been remarked how similar is the hostility towards musical innovation, shared by Aristophanes and Plato, to the reaction against the sweeping changes wrought on severer classical idioms by the loose structures of our romantic composers from about the middle of the nineteenth century. The changes then accelerated by technological developments in the sophistication and tonal range of instruments are paralleled in Greece in the extension of the scales, and the consequent manual dexterity involved in playing

too funny, part giving this up and part solemn? None the less Janko holds that Aristotle put Aristophanes in the "middle" category, and held him up as the very pinnacle of poets. Janko leaps to the defence of every phrase in the *Tractatus*, and by hook or by crook immobilizes every objection. But cumulatively there is a surfeit of special pleading. Early on, for example, a problem is produced by the twists of his own argument. Talking of the cathartic power of tragedy the *Tractatus* says that it "removes" the audience's emotions, when Janko after a lively discussion concludes that by *catharsis* in the surviving *Poetics* Aristotle really meant "purified, made bearable and reduced to moderation".

The worst single "amateurism" in the *Tractatus* seems to me to be its formal definition of comedy, which follows very closely *mutatis mutandis* the definition of tragedy in the *Poetics*. This would be direct quotation rather than précis. The familiar definition of tragedy ends " . . . effecting through pity and fear the *catharsis* of the like emotions": the *Tractatus* substitutes "effecting through pleasure and laughter the *catharsis* of the like emotions". Elsewhere in Aristotle "pleasure" is the result of emotions rather than itself an emotion - but let that pass: how can laughter be an emotion? Laughter is no more an emotion than hair standing on end, weeping, trembling, or blushing: it is a physical manifestation of various emotions (including hysterical fear).

For all Janko's devotion to it, the *Tractatus Colossianus* is not nearly as good as he claims. His commentary, many times the length of its subject, is much more interesting and stimulating. In the course of it he makes many good observations on the (surviving) *Poetics* and on other ancient literary criticism of drama. But the *Tractatus*, while it contains material ultimately derived from Aristotle, still looks like the teaching notes of a conscientious but shallow schoolmaster, a Holofemes of late antiquity. "Tragedy has grief for its mother . . . Comedy has laughter for its mother . . ." - such naive pedagogy may have gone down well in the classroom, but it is nothing like Aristotle.

A last word to anyone thinking of reading both this book and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, a fascinating, rambling, labyrinthine novel with something Aristophanic in its combination of the true and the grotesque, serious and playful. For a reason which would be invalidated if revealed, I recommend that you read the Eco first.

kithara and aulos. Aristophanes, stubbornly conservative in this, as in most things, delighted in parodying such novelties, and abusing their representatives, chiefly the new dithyrambic school of itinerant foreign virtuosi, for their deleterious influence on music.

One of the most remarkable pieces of Greek musical literature, preserved in Chapter Thirty of the Plutarch essay, is a substantial fragment of another comic poet, Pherecrates, from his *Chiron* (the title presumably alludes to the traditional moral and musical education of Achilles by the wise Centaur), in which a female character representing Music described how she had just suffered what is called in today's phraseology "gang-rape" at the hands of a quartet of avant-garde musicians. (The *double-entendre* involving contemporary musical terminology is occasionally puzzling, but the effect can best be appreciated by substituting mentally the names of one's least favourite twentieth-century composers.) The fourth and last is, inevitably, the arch-conoclast, Timotheus of Miletus, with his "perverted anti-tracks". This lively expression for the chromatically modulating *kampai* (bends) of these musicians is clarified further in a Byzantine treatise on tragedy published in 1963 by Robert Browning.

Timotheus, like the erstwhile ogres of our own romantic period, later became a respectable "classical" composer, just as Euripides, whom Aristophanes accused of writing tunes derived from "harlot songs, drinking songs, Carian pipings, dirges and dance music" became the most popular of the tragedians. But later writers continued to look back nostalgically to the golden age of musical simplicity and severity. Looming in the background is the figure of the educationalist Damon, music teacher and political adviser of Pericles, and represented by Plato as meriting unusual respect from Socrates for his uncompromising view that changes in musical idiom prefigured, even caused, a revolutionary upheaval in social and political life.

The Cambridge University Press has produced here a book of good quality, and it is to be hoped that the companion volume will soon be forthcoming.

New horizons

John Nash

M. RUSSELL
Visions of the Sea: Hendrick C. Vroom and the origins of Dutch marine painting
 218pp. Leiden: Brill/Leiden University.
 90 04 06938 0

Visions of the Sea is a scholarly monograph on an unfamiliar topic, not calculated to interest a wide public, but a valuable contribution to a crucial and still obscure period in the evolution of Dutch painting. The subject is the little known and seldom-discussed Dutch marine artist, Hendrick Vroom (1566-1640), who is represented in three recent surveys of Dutch painting (including my own) by a work which Margarita Russell attributes to a follower.

Dr Russell's method is, at first sight, pedantic, even pedestrian. As she points out in her introduction:

The traditional artist's monograph . . . would hardly explain how, in the last decade of the sixteenth century, a young Dutch painter could specialize in a new type of painting so successfully that he soon had a host of followers and imitators, as well as illustrious patrons. In order to understand such a remarkable phenomenon it is necessary to survey certain socio-historical, artistic and cultural developments of the sixteenth century and earlier.

Russell's first illustration is from the de Limbourg brothers' *Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, c. 1415-16; and in the first four chapters she, diligently, and apparently exhaustively compiles an inventory and taxonomy of marine painting. But this is never tedious because Russell is so attentive and perspicacious: she is always aware of the significance of her material. In her first chapter, "The Vision of the Sea in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century painting", she considers the development of the complex skills necessary to represent the elusive and protean element of water. The next two chapters, "The Changing Image of the World: The

painter-Cartographer" and "Ship Portraiture", not only show how map-making and ship portraiture call for drawing schemata at odds with each other and the "much narrower window-view" of the Italian Renaissance, but also how they led to works whose purpose was scientific as well as artistic. In contrast to these technical concerns and practical functions, in Chapter Four, "Mundus Mare - The Vanitas Seascape", the symbolism of seascape is considered.

And so, when Russell turns to Vroom, the reader has been alerted to the challenging potential in seascape at the end of the sixteenth century, and is prepared to recognize the inventiveness, imagination and originality of Vroom in realizing it. Russell shows that the demand for marine painting, which increased around 1600, far from being an inevitable consequence of the Dutch Republic's rise as a maritime power, had been created by Vroom a decade or so earlier: "His ships and seascapes aroused much admiration and sold rapidly". He produced every kind of image involving sailing and the sea: ship portraits, sea battles, storms, naval celebrations, coastal scenes or *strandjes*, and prospects of towns (not always coastal). His most exalted commission, from the Lord Admiral of the English Navy, was to design the ten tapestries representing episodes in the defeat of the Spanish Armada which hung in the House of Lords from 1595 until the fire of October 16, 1834. He also painted decorative overdoors and designed engravings.

In *Visions of the Sea* Russell establishes Vroom as a major innovator not only of marine painting but, with his *strandjes* and prospects (and by way of his spin, Corneille) of Dutch landscape painting. More generally, she shows an understanding of the distinctive constitution of Dutch art, the skills and traditions that it drew upon, and the diverse roles and functions it had within the culture, and the book may be compared with the recent much praised *Art of Describing* by Svetlana Alpers.

Funny, in moderation

Oliver Taplin

RICHARD JANKO
Aristotle on Comedy: Towards a reconstruction of Poetics II
 294pp. Duckworth. £24.
 07156 16587

Most of ancient Greek literature is lost; the shelves are largely empty spaces. One of the most frustrating gaps is that next to Aristotle's *Poetics*, left by the second, no doubt shorter, part in which he turned from Tragedy and Epic to Comedy. We have only wisps of cobweb, unless we accept the thesis of Richard Janko's energetically learned new book: that in two and a half pages from a tenth-century Byzantine manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the so-called *Tractatus Colossianus* (first printed in 1839, and helpfully photographed here) we have a highly accurate précis of Aristotle. Further, he argues that for Aristotle the *entelechy*, or *acme*, of Comedy was Aristophanes. Janko is not quite the first to argue along these lines, but he displays unprecedented scholarship and pertinacity.

When Aristotle made Sophocles the *entelechy* of Tragedy, and lumped together more recent writers as "the others", he based this on historical research as well as aesthetic judgment. He had himself collected the chronological records (the *didaskaliai*) of the tragedies, satyr-plays and comedies which had been put on at the Festival of the Dionysia at Athens. These showed how Tragedy flourished for a century with astonishing vigour until it froze almost overnight - a fact already recognized, within months of the deaths of both Sophocles and Euripides, by Aristophanes in his *Frogs* of 405. The genre pettified staring at the reflection of its own Golden Age. The great classics, especially Euripides, were already being reproduced at the Dionysia by 386, and reperformance overshadowed new writing by the time Aristotle wrote his *Poetics* in about 325.

From our perspective we can see that Comedy had two "acmes"; and that Aristotle lived on the threshold of the second. Menander, the best playwright of what we call "New Comedy" may well as an adolescent have attended Aristotle's lectures, and he put on his first play in 321, very soon after the great man's death. Though we cannot trace closely the transition from "Old" to "New", Menander was evidently a master, not inventor of his kind of comedy.

The *didaskaliai* will have shown that Aristophanes was more than thirty years younger than Sophocles and Euripides and lived on into the 380s. Comedy, unlike Tragedy, continued to develop vigorously through the fourth century. Plays began to be re-performed in the 330s, but we have no reason to think that the "Old" comedies of Aristophanes and his contemporaries were ever produced again. In less than a century "Comedy", that is the plays entered for the comic competition at the Dionysia, had changed almost beyond recognition. Aristophanes is fantastical, personal, political, aggressive, musical, grotesque and obscene: Menander is delicate, understated, humane, bourgeois, with neat and complex plots of true love, human foibles, family storms and reconciliations. Through his Latin imitators he became the prototype of Western comedy. If Aristophanes bequeathed a genre, it was satire.

If Aristotle in his lost *Poetics* took Aristophanes as the *entelechy* of Comedy, what characteristics might we expect to have been observed? That Comedy is intensely topical, political and satirical; that it is full of physical and verbal slapstick and obscenity, also of parody and metatheatrical playing with itself; that Comedy is fantastical and topsy-turvy, "carnavalesque"? All these things are true of Aristophanes, and yet not one of them is to be found clearly in the *Tractatus Colossianus*. Moreover, in the *Ethics* and elsewhere, Aristotle generally takes a high-minded line against abuse and obscenity, and is unlikely to have praised such features of "Old" Comedy. Had he lived a few more years, he would surely have much preferred Menander to the gargantuan overabundance of Aristophanes. I doubt whether, as Janko must suppose, Aristotle thought that comedy had gone downhill since those days.

The very last sentence of the *Tractatus* is about the different kinds of comedy. It reads (interrupted by my remarks): "Comedy may be classified into (a) Old, which is funny to excess . . . This seems to be a contradiction in terms, but the strait-laced Aristotle might have said something of the sort about Aristophanes. (b) New, which gives this up, but tips towards solemnity . . . This might at a pinch be applied to Menander. Aristophanes claims to be 'serious' - in combination, not in contrast, with being funny; - but 'solemn' never." (c) Middle, which is a mixture of (a) and (b). Pretty clearly this is not a chronological intermediate, but a "Golden Mean" compromise. And yet how could a comedy be par-

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From lawyer to Liberator

Roy Foster

CHARLES CHENEVIX TRENCH
The Great Dan: A biography of Daniel O'Connell
345pp. Cape. £10.95.
0224 021761

The idea of a Pantheon, jejune and vain as it may be, is part of the received version of Irish history; and the figure of Daniel O'Connell is inseparable from the notion. His monumental image is moved nervously around; once placed on a level with Grattan and Parnell, the great practitioner of non-violent resistance was relegated to the shadows as the stock of Tone and de Valera rose. But he is indubitably among the heroes, even if not always occupying the position which he would have expected, and devoted much time to consciously preparing. (For it should be added that one reason why O'Connell is so much part of the pantheon idea is that he himself was often jejune and invariably vain.)

Worrying about where he "fits" inevitably means ignoring what was most significant about his career; it is a mistake made by all the biographies, and it is the reason why the best things written about him are specialist studies by scholars like Angus Macintyre, Kevin Nowlan, Fergus O'Ferral and Jacqueline Hill. The great biography is awaited, and Charles Chenevix Trench makes no pretence that he has provided it. But his is the first study to be grounded firmly on the seven volumes of correspondence edited as a tremendous labour of love and scholarship by O'Connell's great-grandson, Professor Maurice O'Connell. While Trench's approach is determinedly popular, he has used the letters well. They enable the emotional, stagey, affectionate figure to speak in his own words: notably as an indulgent father and devoted husband (though the evidence may be slightly skewed by the fact that O'Connell destroyed all his wife's "angry" letters). Most clearly of all, he appears as an inveterate spendthrift, marked by an almost pathological inability to manage finances; the sort of Irishman who might have been invented by Thackeray.

Mr Trench has also incorporated recent "finds" of considerable importance - for instance, a letter from William Parnell-Hayes originating the idea of a Catholic Rent to support the emancipation movement (discovered by Brian Macdonald), and some acid allegations by Henry Grattan (the younger) about O'Connell's sinister influence in Dublin Castle. Much recent scholarship has been taken into account (though there are questionable generalizations about the complexion of Poor Law boards, and the effect of the famine, which are not borne out by recent research). The real value of the book helps to vitiate its odd infelicities of style. Trench, an Ascendancy ex-soldier who has written much on the period, is not afraid to air occasional plummy prejudices. Parenthetical remarks abound: "It is arguable that but for the armed struggle, all 32 counties of Ireland

would now be free, but this is not the place to argue it." "If one accepts the premise that organized labour can do no wrong, the Liberator amply deserves the odium which has been heaped upon him by twentieth-century Irish socialists." The bluff parade-ground style too easily degenerates into slang ("things were hotting up", "it was a right cock-up", "he was not all piss and wind"); and there are far too many anecdotes. But it all adds up to a personal, strong-minded and likeable book.

The chief difficulties are provided by the immense figure of O'Connell himself. Sometimes a note of desperation creeps even into Trench's heroically decisive style: "Was he deceiving himself, or trying to deceive others? One never knows with O'Connell." The move from lawyer to Emancipationist to Repealer, and the tension between Westminster and the mass meetings, produced a kaleidoscope of activity: taken with the man's protean qualities, his emotionalism, his vanity, his vast political energy, one is faced with a phenomenon which cannot be stopped short and anatomized.

One theme that dominates is that of religion. "The difficulty is Protestantism", wrote O'Connell when engaged on his campaign to repeal the Union. He desperately wanted Protestant supporters, and fulsomely courted them; but at the same time he was assuring his Catholic contacts that the achievement of repeal would mean an end to Irish Protestantism, which was purely a "political" stance. (Like most of the figures in the Pantheon, he knew next to nothing of Belfast.) His anticipation of a Catholic-dominated Ireland, as well as his mobilization of popular organization, and his brisk dismissal of the Irish language as a reactionary force, make him appear the great apostle of modernization. But one of Trench's most important insights is to see him, not only as the quintessential eighteenth-century Catholic gentleman (beautifully demonstrated in his Kerry fiefdom of Derryneane), but also as a quintessential eighteenth-century politician. "It is a measure of O'Connell's genius that he turned upside-down the normal eighteenth-century political practice. It was universally assumed that the only way to win people's support was to give them money in one form or another. He saw that far more devoted support could be won by taking their money." It was an eighteenth-century approach nonetheless; Trench might have added that the core of O'Connell's parliamentary group was a family connection in the purest Namierite mould, and that his view of Chartists as "the worst of Tories" indicates a political ethos of unreconstructed Whiggery.

But the neat formula of a Georgian O'Connell cannot accommodate the real paradoxes, as Trench fully realizes. The Liberator's followers raise problems of their own (why was support for Catholic Emancipation so weak in the West? And what kind of Protestants supported the movement?). When Irish politics before Parnell come to be Hanhamized - a task for which the O'Connell correspondence is a great and underrated source - where will his



"The real potato blight of Ireland", an illustration taken from the book reviewed here.

leadership fit in? For all his dislike of "Tories", he comprehended that "a Conservative has but one fault, which is indeed a thumper: he wants Ascendancy - a thing impossible to be revived. But he is, after that, Irish, often very, very Irish." Isaac Butt and some of his friends were making the same discovery at the same time; O'Connell's federalist kites in a sense anticipated them. It is ironic that he should have been traduced for this by the Young Irelander Gavan Duffy, who would decades later adopt both federalism and Tory Home Rule; for it was the Gavan Duffy view of Irish history that did most to denigrate O'Connell's achievements after his death.

The roots of poverty

Charles Townshend

DENIS KNIGHT (Editor)
Cobbett in Ireland: A warning to England
302pp. Lawrence and Wishart. £12.50.
085315595X

Although Cobbett was quite extensively involved in Irish issues, this aspect of his campaigning has not received much prominence - and has indeed escaped the attention of one or two of his biographers. Yet as George Spater observes in his foreword to this new collection, Cobbett's tour of Ireland in the Autumn of 1834 was in a sense the "capstone to his career". Besides fulfilling a long-nursed desire, it allowed the old trouble-maker to surf pleasantly in waves of adulatory Irish rhetoric at public receptions in Dublin, Kilkenny, Waterford, Clonmel, Cork and Limerick. At last he was given ample recognition both as activist and as writer (in the latter capacity he was judged to surpass Swift in "purity, simplicity, clearness and cogency").

From Ireland he wrote for the *Political Register* a series of reports and admonitions, which were intended to herald a book on Ireland's woes under the title *The Sufferings of Ireland: A Warning to England*. He did not live to write the book, and the pieces have not until now been republished as a group. The ten letters to Charles Marshall, an illiterate labourer on his recently-acquired Hampshire farm, perhaps give some idea of what the book might have been like. Do they match up to the encomiums of Cobbett's Irish hosts? Opinions have varied. Among his biographers, G.D.H. Cole thought them "excellent"; Spater, however, frankly judged them "dull" - though he tactfully refrains from evaluating them in this foreword. They are certainly didactic and patronizing as one would expect, though Cobbett's graphic evocation of Irish misery is not without grim drama.

Few readers are likely to endorse Cole's view that these communications deserve to be published together with the *Rural Rides*. They lack the latter's wealth of pungent detail. There is a certain generalized repetitiveness to Cobbett's view of the woes of Irish rural society. Rather like Marx (with whom the editor of

"Achievements" bring us back to the Pantheon. It is tempting to argue that O'Connell's chief qualification for inclusion is his heroically unpolitic capitulation before the threat of armed force at the 1843 Clontarf meeting, thus depriving Young Ireland of civilian martyrdom. Trench would not agree; Catholic Emancipation is for him the towering achievement, though recently the property disqualifications that accompanied the measure have been seen as at least as politically important as the technical liberation that it brought. In fact, Trench claims for O'Connell exactly what the late Leland Lyons defined as the achievement of Parnell: "he gave his people back their self-respect". Perhaps the fact that this operation appears to be necessary in every political generation is the most long-lasting characteristic of the colonial process.

O'Connell and Parnell are oddly twinned; but across the apparent gulf between Kerry bonhomie and Ascendancy hauteur they shared much. They both had a resolute contempt for English politicians, an intuitive feel for mass organization, a genius for parliamentary obstructionism, and an inability to make money except from politics. Strangely, it was O'Connell's implacable enemy in County Clare, "the" O'Gorman Mahon, who survived to act as harbinger of Parnell's ruin: when, half a century later, at another Clare election, he introduced the Irish leader to Captain O'Shea. With O'Gorman Mahon and Gavan Duffy, longevity and malevolence had their day when O'Connell's was long done. But his inheritance remained the galvanizing force of constitutional resistance which he unleashed, along with the strength (rare in Irish political culture) of working within one's known limitations. Mr Trench has done a salutary job in bringing these priorities to the attention of the general reader of Irish history.

this collection strives to connect him), Cobbett was hampered in his grasp of Irish conditions by his overriding political conceptions. In fact, the bulk of his writing from Ireland dealt squarely with English issues. Ireland provided a "warning" on two levels. It demonstrated the paramount necessity of popular action - only the English people could liberate Ireland. (Cobbett advocated a separate Irish legislature as the remedy for Ireland's problems with the same faith with which he advocated annual parliaments in England. But he was never a true Repealer: in Dublin his assertion that military existed before the Act of Union was answered by cries of "no, no.")

More crucially still, Ireland warned the English people to resist a similar fate. Such a fate, he held, was being prepared for them by the "coarser-food ministry" and its new poor law. Cobbett saw Ireland as a rich country whose peasantry was impoverished, not through lack of industriousness, but by a vicious system of exploitation. Heartless absentee landlordism combined with the culture of the potato, the "damned root" which permitted dangerous overpopulation, to ensure that pigs lived better than people. The misery of the Irish labourers was due to the absence of legal guarantees of their right to a share of the wealth created by their labour. (Though, again, in Dublin there was mutual incomprehension, when Cobbett rode this favourite hobbyhorse to be met by protests of "no poor law".)

Cobbett's radicalism, albeit often reactionary or contradictory, could be exhilarating in its purity. This collection has its share of such excitement, as where he demands that government acknowledge the reciprocity of protection and allegiance ("can there be allegiance where no protection is given?"), or produces a spine-tinglingly subversive analysis of military service. Once, rousing his audience with untended echoes, he held that he "would support have beer and bread, and live under a king, or even in a republic, than eat lumpers, and be long to an empire!" When he got news of the burning-down of the Westminster parliament house, he wondered if the "savage spirit of exultation" raised by the watching crowd did not reflect its verdict on the crimes of that august institution. Here, sadly, he seems to have been wrong.

Toilers and tributaries

David Brading

NANCY M. FARRISS
Maya Society Under Colonial Rule: The collective enterprise of survival
585pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £55.40 (paperback, £13.90).
0691 076685
KAREN SPALDING
Huarochiri: An Andean society under Inca and Spanish rule
364pp. Stanford University Press.
08047 11232

Few myths have enjoyed a greater vogue in Latin America than the peasant commune, a model of Indian society which has gained wide acceptance from both anthropologists and historians. Justification for this theory lies in the assertion that within less than a century of the Spanish Conquest the natives of Mesoamerica and the Andes had been reduced to the level of a relatively undifferentiated peasantry. The loss of over 90 per cent of their population caused by a succession of epidemics and the progressive disruption of intensive forms of agriculture drove the survivors, so it is argued, to barricade themselves within a series of tightly knit, inward-looking villages, immersed in a paganism barely touched by missionary endeavour, precariously defending their communal lands from the encroachment of nearby latifundia. Yet much of the historical evidence now available suggests that social hierarchy and economic differentiation remained a pervasive characteristic of Indian society throughout the entire colonial period.

The central contention of *Maya Society* is that the native elite - the descendants of the former ruling dynasties and their nobility and priesthood - both survived the Conquest and continued to dominate the political and ceremonial life of their people until the nineteenth century. The reasons for their retention of power, if I understand correctly what is a long and persuasively argued book, are threefold: Spanish neglect, the nature of the landscape and the forms of religious cult. To start with, Yucatán was an economic backwater which attracted little Spanish settlement and possessed few marketable resources. Apart from a scatter of cattle estancias, the Spaniards therefore had to live off the Indians. Tribute, which elsewhere reverted to the crown, continued to support the colonial elite well into the eighteenth century. Labour drafts, in other provinces destined for the mines or agriculture, here took the form of domestic service. *Repartimientos de comercio* consisted of the distribution of cash in return for cotton *mantas* and beeswax, Yucatán's chief exports. None of these exactions proved overly burdensome and in the absence of any district magistrates, the plague of other provinces, it fell to the Indian elite to collect taxes and allocate tasks without undue interference.

In large measure, however, it was the type of slash-and-burn, swidden agriculture practised on a vast jungle-covered plain which stretches from Yucatán to the region of Peten in Guatemala which demanded the existence of a settled elite if corporate identity was to be preserved. For in this relatively uniform landscape, flanked throughout the colonial period by a deep open frontier, land was in abundant supply. The extended families which constituted the basic social unit covered all their subsistence needs by shifting their plots of maize, beans, cotton and other staples every three to four years. In times of hardship or unrest, families or young couples simply fled across the frontier into the "wilderness" or alternatively sought refuge in Spanish estates as tenant farmers. Migration and dispersal were endemic among this tropical peasantry. In a universe, thus composed of mobile, interchangeable units, it was the Maya elite who maintained and indeed, Nancy M. Farriss maintains, constituted each community, defending its frontiers from neighbourly invasion, allocating land among its component families and ensuring that all the demands of the Spanish state were satisfied in equitable fashion. In return the peasantry offered the elite labour service, cultivating their plots and freeing them from any manual work.

The corporate, hierarchical nature of Indian

communities found expression in their religious cult. Professor Farriss argues persuasively against the common notion of syncretism of pagan belief and Christianity or of underground pagan survival. Instead, by the close of the sixteenth century, pagan beliefs and rites had been firmly relegated to the level of superstition, magic and folk-healing, tolerated as such by the clergy, there to remain until the present day as a parallel, private system. At the level of public religion, the Indians - after a generation of attempted syncretism which incurred savage missionary repression - generally adopted what might be called folk Catholicism, which is to say, they took from Spain the cult of saints' images, crosses and figures of Christ. Confraternities were established with generous endowments of land to support liturgical celebrations, processions and ceremonial feasts. Where Indian tradition was most observable was in the insistence on collective, ceremonial feasts, a practice derived from the old belief that the divine powers which animated the universe required feeding through sacrifice and communal banquets. Needless to say, it was the Maya elite who organized church ritual, dominated the confraternities and occupied the chief places at these public feasts, which served both to distribute the surplus produced on confraternity lands and to confirm the principle of social hierarchy. The past, however, was not entirely forgotten, since there circulated in secret the books of *Chilam Balam*, in which ancient Maya history and prophecy mingled with cyclical cosmology and Christian millennialism.

To what extent traditional Indian elites survived elsewhere in the Spanish Empire remains to be seen. The development of a market economy and different types of agriculture created more "modern" forms of social hierarchy. For the Mixteca Alta in southern Mexico, Rodolfo Pastor has traced the emergence of a class of *principales*, the leading men in each village who took advantage of their profits in regional markets to purchase plots from their poor neighbours and thus consolidate appreciable farms. In this region, of course, the land was under regular cultivation and individual rights of ownership clearly established. Unlike the Maya elite, these men formed an economic class, whose position was confirmed rather than based on their dominance of town councils and confraternities.

In any case, the conditions which allowed the Maya elite to survive their incorporation into the Western World changed dramatically in the late eighteenth century when the enlightened servants of the Bourbon dynasty appropriated community funds and auctioned off confraternity lands. At much the same time, Spanish estates turned from cattle-ranching to the cultivation of cash crops for export, encroaching on Indian lands just when the native population was once more on the increase. This process of economic "modernization" gathered momentum after independence since the new republic deprived Indian villages of their political status, consigning their administration to Creole-dominated *municipios* which soon alienated great tracts of communal land in favour of the rapidly expanding henequen plantations. The Maya elite which had depended on the access to land and labour provided by their control of civic and religious office now found their economic position undermined as they could no longer afford the expenditure on banquets and fiestas expected of men of their rank. In desperation, at the loss of their land and corporate identity, the Mayas rose in the savage Caste War which started in 1847 and sought to expel the entire hispanic community from Yucatán.

Unlike many historians of colonial America who are still content simply to summarize archival material, Farriss subjects her evidence to rigorous control as she systematically seeks to provide answers to questions about native society more usually put by anthropologists when analysing the modern peasantry. Indeed, she "upstreams" current interpretations of native religion to assist in the comprehension of colonial cults. The result is a remarkably comprehensive, impressive piece of work which opens a new era in our approach to the history of Indian society under Spanish rule. In particular, its emphasis on the resilient, essentially creative reaction of the native elite to the chal-

lenge of European conquest and settlement will be tested and applied to other provinces of the Spanish empire. If I have any reservations about the book, it is that in her eagerness to establish a strenuously argued line of discourse, the author refrains from assisting the reader by much in the way of apt quotation or lively incident.

In the Andean world, thanks largely to the influential theories of John Murra, the peasant commune still rides high. There are good reasons for this. For as Karen Spalding points out, the sharp declivities of the Andes in Huarochiri, a province situated in the mountains above Lima, obliged families to wrest their subsistence from diverse plots of land situated at different ecological niches, at times separated by considerable distance. The range here could extend from pasture for llamas and sheep on the high *puna* to cotton and coca plantations in tropical lowlands, with maize potatoes grown in irrigated terraces cut into the valley sides. To deal with this difficult terrain cooperation was essential, so that the basic social unit was the *ayllu*, a group of families with a common if often fictitious ancestor, which co-ordinated the exchange and organization of labour according to the principle of reciprocity. This pattern of scattered landholding, when combined with the necessity of communal action to construct and maintain extensive irrigation channels, required political mediation in the person of the *kuraka* or local lord. As in Yucatán the peasantry offered labour service, cultivating the lord's lands, in return for which he expended the resulting surplus in communal feasts. The achievement of the Incas was based on their skilful employment of this system, which allowed them to mobilize massive contingents of labour for the construction of highways and fortresses in return for which they extended irrigation channels and terraces.

If in the opening chapters of *Huarochiri*, Professor Spalding deploys her evident familiarity with the local landscape and her first-hand knowledge of recent archaeological work to great advantage, she fails to provide more than a jejune account of the Spanish Conquest and its aftermath. There is little mention here of that phase of cooperation between conquerors and *kurakas* that Steven Stern described so well in his illuminating study of Huamanga. Moreover, the discussion of religion largely consists of a narrative account of the successive campaigns to extirpate idolatry which reached their climax in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Wholly absent is any consideration of what elements of Catholicism entered the Indian mind. Yet the well-known chronicle of Huamanga Poma de Ayala offers ample testimony to the appeal of

Franciscan preaching of Christianity as the gospel of the poor. That in the Andes, as in Mexico, the Indian elite invested considerable sums in the decoration of churches and on the provision of feasts goes without mention. Yet in the 1751 revolt at Huarochiri, European influence was clearly evident in the call for an Indian Moses to liberate the natives of Peru from their bondage.

For the eighteenth century Spalding presents the familiar story of mounting exploitation leading to widespread revolt. The problem here is that not all the evidence squares with the conclusion. For a start, the Indians of Huarochiri remained in full possession of their land, obtaining royal titles for areas in dispute. Moreover, they increasingly entered a market economy, producing foodstuffs for Lima and nearby mining camps. Many men also migrated to the capital and coastal valleys in search of seasonal employment. At the same time, the wealthier peasants engaged in transport, using mules to carry goods from the capital across the Andes. The result was a pattern of social differentiation similar to that found in the Mixteca Alta: the emergence of a class of prosperous farmers producing for the market who purchased lands from their neighbours within the community. Just how this shift in land-ownership was reconciled with the traditional claims of the *ayllus* is not made clear. At the same time, the *kurakas* preserved their status as essential intermediaries between the peasantry and the colonial authorities and fortified their position as private landlords.

What impresses one when reading these two books is the great difference in the scale of contributions demanded of villagers in Yucatán and Huarochiri. For whereas the Maya peasant paid some eight pesos a year to Church and State, his Andean counterpart was expected to find at least twenty-three pesos and often well over thirty pesos a year. Although Crown tribute was three times greater in Peru than in Mexico, the difference is explained by the heavy incidence of *repartimientos de comercio*, which largely consisted of the enforced distribution of mules brought up from the Argentine pampas. The economic rationale of this system is elusive and is certainly not elucidated by Spalding. What is clear, however, is that the Andean peasantry, by reason both of their ability to work across the year and through their incorporation into a market economy, were far more prosperous than the Mayas and indeed other Mexican Indians, who rarely possessed the quantity of livestock found in the Andes. Ironically, the level of exploitation as expressed in obligations to pay tribute and meet the cost of *repartimientos* thus can serve as an index of the vigour of peasant economy.

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From a hearty past

Tom Shippey

FRANÇOIS GALLIX (Editor)
T. H. White, Letters to a Friend: The correspondence between T. H. White and L. J. Potts
278pp, Gloucester: Alan Sutton. £11.50.
0862990475

T. H. White died in 1964, and L. J. Potts, his tutor, Fellow in English of Queens' College, Cambridge, only four years earlier. However, their letters recorded here – mostly White's, as Potts's were destroyed by accident – seem to belong to a much earlier age, and one from which one can only be glad to have escaped. It is on the face of it amazing that the authoritative, reticent and delicate author of *The Once and Future King* could have written so many of these wrong-note pieces, places in which (for instance) the death of Potts himself is greeted with "God's a bugger, and that's all there is to it", in which the widow is told that her grief must certainly be a "physical condition . . . exaggerated by the menopause", and in which almost any mention of the Potts daughters is covered by a braying pretence that they are horses, or parrots, to be fed on damp bran and linseed mash and taught (of course) to say "bugger". You can never tell what friends will find funny in each other's conversation; but on the evidence I would have thought Mrs Potts's heart must have sunk, pretty often, on seeing an envelope from Doolstown or Stowe.

The datedness of the letters really seems to lie in their oscillations between genuine inhibition and a modish frankness, just like White's studied use of taboo words, but on a larger scale. The only subject on which White seems to write with feeling and without affectation is the death and life of his dog, a red setter called Brownie. In one letter to the Pottses, he gives her biography, interestingly camouflaged all the way through by the pretence that she was White's mistress and slave-girl; but a year later he is writing, heartbroken, to announce her death, made almost unbearable to him by

the fact that, by freakish chance, he was separated from her the day she died. (Characteristically, White wrote the letter with the dead dog on his lap, having convinced himself, as a result of anaesthesia a couple of months before, that the mind continued to function even after external stimuli had been cut. "I think one probably retains some mental processes after death, for some time", he wrote. "Dim, slow and not for long but there." So in case Brownie was still aware of him, he sat and stroked her cold head till he was sure the spark had gone.)

There White showed an almost morbid empathy. With human females this appears to have been completely absent. He seems indeed to have known virtually nothing of women at all. He kept appealing to Mary Potts for expert correction on his female characters; and wrote with repeated and patent self-contradiction about the progress of his "affairs" with barmaids and farmers' daughters, WAAFs and teenagers. "Anything but marriage is out of the question", he declares in one letter. Same girl,

Towards an unguessed future

A. O. J. Cockshut

GERARD TRACEY (Editor)
The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman Volume VI: The Via Media and Froude's "Remains". January 1837 to December 1838 417pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.
0199201412

It is twenty-three years since this edition opened at the year 1845, and, having covered the last forty-five years of Newman's life, and his early years, it now has less than seven years to go for completion. It will be – it is already – perhaps the greatest collection of letters in the English language; and the editing of the late Father Dessain, and of his successors, Ian Kerr and Thomas Gornall, has been in every way worthy of the subject and the task. In particular, it has been very strong where some editions

same month, but next letter, it is "Little does she know how close she sails to seduction, and how she will like it!" In fact most girls could clearly lay White flat in a moment. How alarmed he was (concealing it bravely) when the "brat not yet 21" he got engaged to told him she had slept with a dozen men already. Broodingly he decided not to return the confidence, "as I don't want to do so for some reason till after we have had a baby".

This could have happened any time, as White, so expert and detailed on hawking, flying, fletching and Lord knows what else, seems only to have heard rumours (all wrong ones) about contraception. But as White said himself about Lancelotti, "We do not have to dabble in a place which he preferred to keep secret". The main interest of this collection is its demonstration, yet again, that great creative writers do not have to be nice, sensitive, or even modestly competent in everyday social skills. Its secondary interest, entirely adventitious and seemingly unobserved by François

of letters are weak, in giving full information about correspondents and other people mentioned.

While everything Newman wrote is interesting, there are perhaps two periods when the interest of the letters rises to a height. These are from about 1860 to 1875 when Newman came to full maturity and wrote his greatest works, and the later period of the Oxford Movement, which the present volume is now entering, which shows the most rapid development and the majestically slow approach of what had been not only unforeseen but unthinkable, the rejection of Anglicanism in favour of Rome. "Any one who knew any thing of theology would not have confounded me with the Papists", he wrote to his sister, Jemima, on April 25, 1837; and in a note, written nearly fifty years later on a letter to Keble of November 1838, he says "This was the last occasion on which I could prefer a claim for confidence. The very next autumn my misgivings began."

So the reader may be inclined to view these letters with a kind of double vision. We see a very keen-sighted man proceeding as briskly as he can through a thick fog, which hides even the prospect of the immediate future. At the same time we have a sense of his life as a whole, and appreciate the ironies which arise from mentally placing one phase of it beside another, distant one. The surprisingly intimate correspondence with Manning at the time of his wife's death, the impression we get that Manning at this time depended on Newman both for comfort in sorrow, and for general intellectual guidance will suggest very different future scenes: how thirty years on Manning will be Archbishop of Westminster and deeply suspicious of Newman's influence among Catholics; and even oddly misinterpreting the *Apologia* as a plea for Anglicanism; and how more than fifty years on, Manning will be pronouncing Newman's funeral oration, as one cardinal over another.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 196
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 9. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most nearly correct.

Entrées, marked "Author, Author 196" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

1. Land, says I; air, I thought you don't intend to be made; no, says he; my dear, and then he kissed me, till he took away my breath – and I pretended to be angry, and to get away; and then he kissed me again, and breathed very short, and looked very silly; and by-and-by Mrs. Yewley came in, and looked like to have spoiled sport.

2. The limit of Shiloh was almost elapsed when I began to feel that I had slain a man. I turned the flame by pressing her against my breast and kissing her delicious lips. I then, bared the door of her dining-room, led her all quivering into her bedroom, and was just making a triumphant entry when we heard her landlady coming up.

3. Under the dimmest of pretences, (this was our very last chance, and nothing really mattered) we escaped from the net, to the beach, and found a beautiful

Galix, is as a picture of the 1920s and 30s when White's character was formed. Martin Green schematized the English upper class of that period as Rascals, Hearties and Dandies. White was painfully far from being a Rascal, and his patriotism and dedication to country sports ought to have put him in with the Hearties and John Buchan. The Dandies had him worried though. Otherwise I cannot believe that a Queens' man would so far have forgotten himself as to lampoon his Irish hosts, give his old tutor the lie, and recommend to his god-daughter a course of industrious self-promotion by promiscuity. You can see that none of it was meant; but that no attitude once struck could be retreated from, least of all on the grounds that White would actually have felt most, the too readily derisive ones of elementary decency or common good form. There was much of White in his birdwatching Arthur and painfully conscientious Lancelotti. These letters hint, too, at an Oedipal Agave, a sneering ironic Mordred in the heart.

Different volumes of letters will show different aspects of Newman's genius. This one is not rich in passages of eloquence and beauty often found elsewhere. It shows a hard-working man, often frustrated (for instance, by having to edit *The British Critic*; "I wished a friend to be Editor, but had no intention of being nabbed myself"). He is self-critical ("I am like the pane of glass . . . which transmits heat yet is cold"), at times humorous and colloquial, with a line in picturesque exaggeration. He can be slyly ironical. When the Provost of Oxon reported that the new young Queen was a person of very good sense, "This is the highest praise the Provost can give anyone." There are one or two moments of deep feeling as when he tells Keble that his quotation from Virgil ("O passi graviores, dabit deus his quoque finem") brought tears to his eyes. He gives one of the few intelligent comments ever made on Jane Austen that is partly adverse: he likes Emma, but can't stand Jane Fairfax. Mainly though, he is distressed by something which is not Jane Austen's fault: the utter worldliness of the Anglican clergy of the generation before.

One is struck with the slowness with which the movement proceeded in disentangling itself from Protestantism. Newman heard confession for the first time in March 1838, and seemed astonished to be asked, though the practice is clearly laid down in the *Prayer Book*. There is a touch of high comedy in Newman's response to Bishop Bagot's mild criticism (mingled with praise) of the *Tracts*. The bishop had never before encountered a clergyman who actually took his words seriously and was determined to obey the least of them. The main external event is the publication of Froude's *Remains*, which must have convinced many that the Movement was really heading for Rome, as Newman at this time did not dream that it was, although in November 1838 he is writing: "You cannot conceive what unpleasant tendencies to split are developing themselves on all sides."

stretch of sand, and there, in the violet shadow of some red rocks forming a kind of cave, had a tiny session of avid carresses, with someone's left pair of sunglasses for only witness. I was on my knees, and on the point of possessing my darling, when two bearded bathers, the old man of the sea and his brother, came out of the sea with exclamations of ribald encouragement, and four months later the died of typhus in Corfu.

Competition No 192
Winner: Felicity Strong

Answers:
1. The eyes did not notice me, but sparkled with joy on beholding Sancho, my beautiful black and white setter, that was coursing about the field with his muzzle to the ground.

"Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, chapter 2."

2. He changed his note; however, when he saw Skulker's game. The dog was frothed off his back, purple tongue hanging half a foot out of his mouth, and his pendant live streaming with bloody sweat, and his pendant live streaming with bloody sweat, and his pendant live streaming with bloody sweat.

3. I heard a panning sound; a dog came running to the lane. I know most of the dogs in this neighbourhood; it was Phoebe.

Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, chapter 48.

Letters

Bibliothèque Nationale

Sir, – Anita Brookner's satire on the Bibliothèque Nationale (October 5) cries for a rejoinder. It is now more than thirty years ago that I (a foreigner, as she) first entered the library, and I have been back many a time. In my experience books are not produced more slowly than at the Bodleian or the British Library (there is to my knowledge no Woolwich in the Parisian *banlieue*), and not more books would seem to have been misplaced or have otherwise disappeared than in Bloomsbury. I would gladly show Ms Brookner the admittedly hidden corner where she can find the vending machine that serves the direly needed coffee (if it is not out of order). Like everyone else, she need not emerge into the street for a smoke – the covered entry provides an accommodation similar to that of the BM's colonnades, albeit without benches. And surely Ms Brookner cannot have failed to notice among the smokers the traditional seller of *Le Monde*, who makes his appearance shortly after the first edition has come from the press and remains there till closing time. And closing time reminds me that one can work longer hours in Paris than in London, if one wishes. Short-term reader's tickets are issued by the BN at ten minutes' notice, without diplomatic recommendation. In short – I, for one, have not lost my faith in any of the research libraries in a dozen or so countries that it has been my privilege to become familiar with. Researchers should not allow Ms Brookner's words to discourage them from turning to the great repository in the rue de Richelieu.

HANS VAN MARLE.

Weteringschans 131, 1017 SC Amsterdam.

Poet and Audience

Sir, – I should like to guard against certain misapprehensions which Denis Donoghue's review of *The Poet and his Audience* (September 7) may occasion, and to add a comment on what he rightly terms my "self-imposed" limitations.

He begins by describing the picture of Yeats reading into a microphone as "the frontispiece", and complains that it is "misleading as an emblem" of my book. It is perhaps a minor point that there is no frontispiece – what he is referring to is the dust-jacket – but I must mention that I in fact suggested a different design, so that his quarrel is with CUP, and not with me. The implication that I state or imply that Yeats wrote with a radio audience in view is incorrect.

I should also like to make it clear that Professor Donoghue's remark that "to reach a large audience, Pope had to trade on aboddy emotions, including vanity and envy" is simply his interpretation of my account of the manner in which Pope went about collecting subscriptions for his great translation of Homer. It does not express my view, and seems to me to manifest a certain absence of charity as well as a lack of that historical sense which one might expect from a critic who regrets that I do not go far "into the questions posed by the sociology of literature".

Donoghue observes that it would be illuminating "to know who were the readers who bought 60,000 copies of *In Memoriam* within a few months", and asks "whether they were 'largely composed of a particular social class'". This can only be a rhetorical question. Thanks to Richard D. Altick's classic study, *The English Common Reader*, and to Edgar F. Shannon's *Tennyson and the Reviewers*, we know for certain that the early readers of the poem were remarkably wide. While poetry was relatively expensive, anyone familiar with the period is aware of the importance of the circulating libraries; as I mention on page 133, the proprietor of Mudge's Select Library put fifty copies of *In Memoriam* into circulation on the day of publication.

It seems strange that a critic sympathetic to the sociology of literature, or indeed to any disciplined study, should commit himself to the confident if enigmatic statement that we may deduce "as much as we want to deduce" about Gray's attitude to his audience when he wrote the *Elegy* from an unsubstantiated observation made by William Empson some fifty years ago. If there is ever to be a sociology of literature of any value, it must surely be based on many

detailed studies such as my own, studies undertaken by those who are not too proud to practise the writing of literary history. My goal is the truth, and I cheerfully accept the judgment that it can only be one side of the truth. I believe that every poet is different, in his relation to his audience as in other respects. I intend to consider certain other poets on another occasion, and I hope that other scholars will pursue what appears to me a fruitful line of inquiry. If a writer with a different cast of mind from my own chooses to consider the topic in a much more theoretical manner, I shall read his work with interest – though I confess that I shall entertain no exaggerated expectations about his conclusions. "So stated", I may find myself remarking, with Arnold, "these are but dry generalities; their whole force lies in their application".

IAN JACK.

Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Edward Elgar

Sir, – The review of my *Spirit of England: Edward Elgar in his world* by Donald Mitchell (September 14), favourable though it is, conveys the impression that this is a "reduction" of my larger book, *Edward Elgar: A creative life* (also under review). In fact the two books follow entirely different plans, with significant differences in their materials.

One of several factual errors in the review is surprising. Mr Mitchell is under the impression that Elgar's father preceded his mother in conversion to Catholicism (penultimate sentence in the review). But as both the books clearly show, Elgar's father, despite his organist's job at the Catholic church of Worcester, was never at any time a Catholic. In fact both of my books make clear that the parents' religious difference was a major factor in the young Elgar's early experience.

The review is inaccurate in a different way about Elgar's relations with his publisher Novello – "thoroughly disagreeable it is to read of the financial humiliations" etc. That was largely early in Elgar's life, and where is the young composer who did not experience it with almost any publisher he approached? Later, throughout the central years, Novello paid Elgar a royalty of no less than 25 per cent on everything he wrote then. The publishers' generosity culminated in Elgar's affectionate friendship with the firm's chairman, Alfred Littleton. Again, all this is made plain in both books and is entirely ignored in the review.

JERROLD NORTHROP MOORE.
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Michelangelo

Sir, – Old misconceptions die hard, as may be seen in John Nash's interesting review (September 28) of the current Age of Vermeer exhibition which contains the assertion that Michelangelo "condemned" Northern art for "minute rendering of surface textures and complex detail". The source for Michelangelo's alleged condemnation is the statement put into his mouth by Francesco de' Hondani in the latter's *Roman dialogues* (MS written 1548 in Portugal, ostensibly referring to conversations of 1539 in Rome, first published in a French translation, Paris 1846). The reliability of this source for Michelangelo's thoughts and opinions has often been debated over the past century, but only scholars who have not concerned themselves with the difficult problems it poses (eg. Clements 1961; Summers 1981) have presumed Hondani's total verbatim accuracy.

I myself lean towards accepting the broad general credibility of Hondani's evidence, as I indicated in my *Warburg Institute Survey*, VII, 1981; and in support of that view I provided some further argument in a letter which you published in your issue of July 16, 1982. Nevertheless there is no certain proof either way, and the cases both for and against the authenticity of the *Dialogues* continue to rest on circumstantial evidence only.

Even if, however, one was prepared to give unqualified acceptance to the accuracy of the opinions credited by Hondani to Michelangelo, it would still be a misrepresentation to say that the latter still condemned Northern art for minute rendering of textures and detail. The Northern art referred to by Michelangelo in Hondani's

Dialogues was (1) that of Dürer, and (2) Flemish painting. Dürer (celebrated for his exact detail) is rated "um grande mestre"; but on Flemish painting Michelangelo voices the sort of mixed feelings which one might expect him to have had – that is a partly critical and partly appreciative reaction, expressed forcibly and not without flashes of that pungent ironical wit for which he was celebrated.

In favour of the Flemish masters is the religious sentiment they inspire in pious hearts, especially those of women (Michelangelo's admired friend Vittoria Colonna had already said as much); but against the Flemings is their lack of "razão [judgment], arte, symetria, proporção, advertência do escolher [discrimination], despejo [boldness], sustancia, e nervo [vigour]". "I do not speak so ill of Flemish painting", he concludes, "because it is all bad, but because it endeavours to do so many things well (each one enough for a very great achievement) that it does not do any of them well."

Neither the admiration for Dürer ("delicada na sua maneira") nor the criticisms of Flemish painters reported by Hondani support the notion that Michelangelo condemned Northern art for minute rendering of surface detail. Nor indeed can the criticism attributed to him be properly understood except in the context given to in the *Dialogues* – that is, his patriotic claim that Italian painters were superior to those of any other European nation.

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SOE and SIS

Sir, – Reviewing *British Intelligence in the Second World War* by F. H. Hinsley et al (October 12), John Keegan says that SOE's humiliation in Holland in 1942 restrained its efforts to displace SIS in operational intelligence-gathering, that the two continued to compete elsewhere, and that SOE acquired a free hand only in Yugoslavia.

In fact, SOE displaced SIS in Denmark (as far as I remember, as deputy head of SOE's Danish section at the time, in 1942) without exerting any effort at all to that end.

Almost inevitably in so small a country, lines were getting crossed, putting both organizations at risk: and as SOE was having all the operational intelligence served up to it by Danish intelligence officers it was in touch with from the start, it was decreed at higher level that SIS should cease to operate in Denmark but should be represented by SOE. The arrangement continued till the end of the war in complete harmony and with great success. SOE passed an immense amount of material, about ship movements, military dispositions, anti-aircraft sites and composition, etc, through to SIS.

As for "their [ie, SOE's and SIS's] differences" with OSS, these were non-existent as far as SOE's Danish section was concerned. SOE and OSS were fully integrated in Baker Street in the later stages of the occupation, OSS loyally accepted SOE's prior interest, seniority and longer experience of the territory, and relations between British and American as well as Danish officers in the section were never anything but cordial.

REGINALD SPINK.
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The Camel

Sir, – I read with great interest Robert Irwin's review of *The Camel*, by R. T. Wilson (September 7), and am happy to report that the 1983 *FAO Production Yearbook* (just out) shows a further rise in the total of camels in the world.

The publication of this book and your review of it, however, give me the excuse to ask your readers whether any of them knows the origin of the definition of the camel as "a horse designed by a committee". It has a First World War ring to it somehow: surely not Glibb or Lawrence but perhaps Allenby. I can find no trace of it in any of the usual reference books; perhaps it is considered too cruel to horses (rather than to camels or committees) to be included in a British collection.

KEITH RICHMOND.
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Basil Blackwell

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COMMENTARY

Up the wall

Stephen Fender

SAM SHEPARD
Fool for Love
Cottesloe Theatre

An itinerant rodeo cowboy called Eddie traces his girlfriend, May, to a seedy motel on the edge of the Mojave Desert, one of the blankest spaces on the American continent, and tries to get her to return to their trailer (or caravan) in Wyoming. She appears to resist this project, but when Eddie goes out of the room momentarily, she snatches a suitcase from under the iron bed and crams it with clothing. They embrace warmly; she kneels him in the ditch. She loves him; she hates him. She doesn't want to live out on the plains in Wyoming, "waitin' around for the Butane to arrive, hiking down to the Inundromat in the rain", but on the other hand she feels imprisoned in the motel room.

Meanwhile Eddie wants her - but then he has before and has always left her too. Even now he is being pursued by what May calls a "countess" in a big black Mercedes. Whatever the truth of this accusation (the audience can see little outside the box-like room), *somebody* keeps pulling up outside, flashing headlights into the room and doing various kinds of clearly audible damage to Eddie's truck and horse trailer.

Two other characters both extend and relax the tension of this uninterrupted seventy-minute drama: the affable, rather simple Martin, with whom May is trying to establish an ordinary dating relationship, and who arrives in take her out to the movies; and an "Old Man" who turns out to be both Eddie's and May's "old man" in the colloquial sense too - by different mothers - and who sits in a rocking-chair outside the set, intervening only to tell stories, make fantasies and get the world straight about the past as he sees it. He is dead, apparently, but alive in the minds of his children.

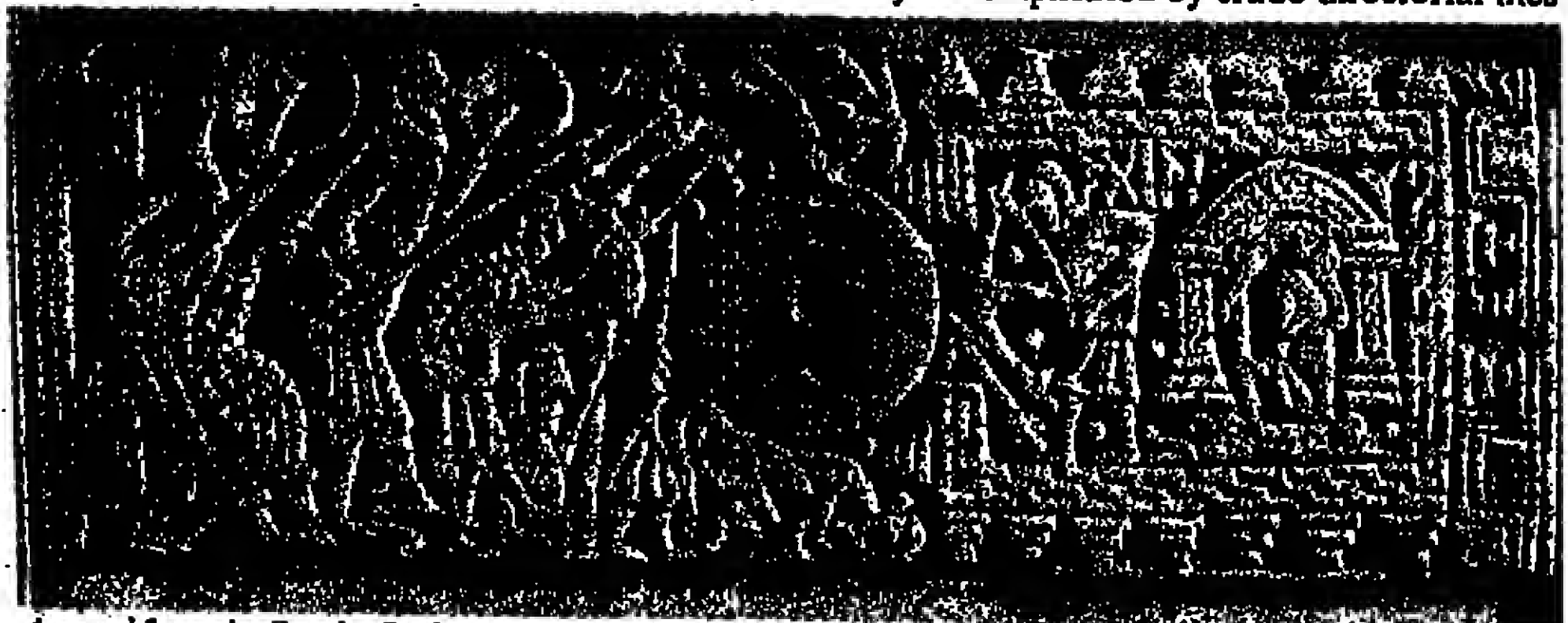
Some of these features will be familiar to Shepard watchers: the rocking-chair as a site of reflection, the joke cowboy as a metaphor of American male assertiveness, the need to tell stories to impose some kind of shape on a featureless social and physical landscape. Shepard is very much a man of the hot medium, a dramatist of long, enthralling monologues that make the audience see what is not there before them. The difference here is that the monologues are trimmed, and focused on the theme of narrative competition. Eddie, May and the Old Man each have a story, and each wants desperately to impose it on the others.

The box set also marks a departure from the usual Shepard stage practice. Yet the motel room only emphasizes the characters' need to

break out; they are forever running into - even literally up - the walls. The doors are amplified so as to resound throughout the theatre every time someone bangs them. But it's not the motel that shuts May in; it's Eddie. Or rather, it's the bed, as an emblem of Eddie's demands, behind the head of which she sometimes stands as behind the bars of a jail. The stories they tell about the past amplify their antinomies in another way. The men are interested in movement - the fact and the means of "lighting out". "Good thing I got out when I did though", says the Old Man. "Best thing I ever did." And he did it in a Plymouth, not a "goddamn Studebaker". He wants to get that clear, anyway, even if he can't remember where he was heading at the time.

What May remembers are feelings - not of expansion and escape, but of painful, immobilized contraction. She recalls her mother after her father abandoned them: "She'd pull herself up into a ball and just stare at the floor." Eddie is vague about feelings. He remembers being "jealous" or "sorry" but has forgotten why.

So what does Peter Gill's production make of all this? Julie Walters's speech rhythms, her emphases and pauses, are just right. Ian Charleson and Tom Watson as Eddie and the Old Man are serviceable, David Troughton very funny as Martin. But there is something a little pious about the thing as a dramatic experience. Everything is so studied, so careful: the script and stage directions meticulously adhered to, the distinguished first-night audience almost afraid to laugh, even at the undoubtedly comic exchanges between Eddie and Martin. Perhaps Shepard is now too overwhelming a phenomenon - the toast of off-Broadway, winner of countless "Obies", not to mention a movie star and general all-round *People* person - to get the sceptical discrimination he must want and need. Certainly the exposure this production has achieved - lead reviews in the daily and Sunday papers, a slot on the radio, arts magazines, even a feature on *Newsnight* - suggests that London, at least, needs to get a grip on itself.



A panel from the Franks Casket showing Egil the Archer defending his home; a plate from Anglo-Saxon Art. From the seventh century to the Norman Conquest by David M. Wilson (224pp, Thames and Hudson, £25, 0 500 233926), which, together with the forthcoming exhibition The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art: 966-1066, opening on November 9 at the British Museum, will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

Unseen problems

Peter Kemp

H. G. WELLS
The Invisible Man
BBC

It was acute of BBC 1 to spot *The Invisible Man's* potential for television. What first caught the adaptor's eye, perhaps, was the scope for special effects. Wisely, though, the production doesn't launch immediately into spectral spectacular. Eternity is gradually unwrapped: at first mainly a matter of lovers startled by an unseen sneezer, a nose tweaked by ghostly fingers. Only in the final seconds of the first episode do things become appreciably sinister, as the invisible Griffin uncovers bandages from round his head, uncovering a face that seems all too much like the camera cranes creepily forward into the yawning gap. Subsequent Gothic high-spots include a floating assemblage of ugly weapons, characters terrorized by a panting but indecipherable pursuer, and a virtuoso sequence in which a dressing gown seemingly comes to life as it struggles into by an invisible body. Best of all are the flashbacks

that flesh out Griffin's experiments to bleach away visibility. In one of the trial runs he stages, a cat dissolves on screen - first stripped to bones, fat and sinews, then just a pair of eyes, finally a miaow. Griffin's own more prolonged disappearing act is embodied - or disembodied - with equally grisly flair.

This television version of the novel - inventively produced by Barry Letts from an excellent adaptation by James Andrew Hall - isn't only on the look-out for invisible *frisson*, though. It also keeps a steady eye on Wells's material and the shape of his fable about phantasmal force. True to this, it opens near to farce and escalates into something more horrendous. (ping) the buccolic backwater Griffin plunges into, is portrayed with expansive affection. As its inhabitants - from pinstriped children to smocked elders - are jolted out of their sleepy routines by the arrival of the swathed stranger, the production seizes with relish on scenes of courtiered consternation and hysterical hypotheses as to what's beneath the bandages. The first repercussions of Griffin's presence - a landlady assaulted by her bedding, night-capped burghers in a dither as an invisible intruder glides around their home

In defence of decency

Keith Jeffery

TOM PAULIN
The Riot Act
DEREK MAHON
High Time
Lyric Theatre, Belfast

The plays in this Field Day Theatre Company double bill could hardly be more different. *The Riot Act* strikingly restates the sombre and passionate story of Antigone, while *High Time* is a slick bright comedy by Rowan and Martin's *Laugh In* out of Molière's *The School for Husbands*.

One reason - apart from "plot exhaustion" - why a writer might want to rework a classic drama is in order to make the enduring truths of the original more accessible to modern audiences. With *Antigone* the first stage of this process is clearly to provide an intelligible English text. Beyond that the opportunity remains for a writer or director to focus the message further by placing the action in some particular political or historical context. But that can obfuscate as much as it may illuminate.

Tom Paulin has kept his options open in his powerful version of the play. He retains the setting in Thebes, but has the characters speak unequivocally in the Ulster vernacular. Antigone is "a hard bitch", Haemon "a sleekit creature", and the Gods are liable to "put the boot in". Perhaps we are therefore to assume some modern Northern Irish parallel for the drama. Paulin's title, otherwise unexplained apart from the propensity of the characters to "read the Riot Act" to each other, lends weight to this. Towards the end of the play, too, the chorus understandably ask for healing and peace, albeit a desire not confined to Ireland. But one of the many virtues of this impressive staging (directed by Stephen Rea) is that of understatement. On a clear, spare set, the cast, clothed in muted greys and blacks, play out a story uncomplicated by crude directorial mes-

sages. The tragedy of Antigone does not require the chorus to be dressed up in police uniforms (of whatever sort), or Creon to masquerade as the tyrant of your choice.

Stephen Rea's hard-headed, business-suited king bears an uncanny resemblance to Richard Nixon, expletives not deleted, justifiably paranoid within his Theban White House. This is a notable performance in which Rea captures both the apparent reasonableness of the public persona and the abrupt impatience of the powerful man in private. Creon's opening speech is particularly good, delivered as a politician's set piece, exhorting loyalty, warning of the consequences which must follow disobedience and urging calm upon a restless populace. It is a well-paced portrayal of the king's increasing derangement and his final reduction to pitiful remorse.

Veronica Quilligan, by contrast, plays a somewhat colourless Antigone. Stubborn, bitter and unbending in defence of individual human decency and the laws of the Gods, the heroine, as perhaps she should, deflects our attention back to the more sympathetically portrayed Creon. The king, after all, suffers most in the play, and does not even have the sanctimonious satisfaction of pious self-sacrifice to ease his soul or his conscience. *The Riot Act* is given admirable coherence by the splendidly choreographed chorus, led by the cool, intense Claran Hinds, who emerges from time to time, like John the Baptist from the Wilderness, to utter occasionally gnomic words of wisdom.

There is also a chorus, of sorts, in *High Time*, including foolish men with Herod Polrot moustaches, a punk or two and a man with green hair playing the piano (badly), who turns out to be Val, the secret lover who eventually weds the strictly educated Isabel. *High Time* is another adaptation by another poet. Derek Mahon has reworked the Molière play, which itself draws on a comedy by Terence based on a Greek original by Menander; clearly a valuable plot. But with the first exorbitantly dreadful rhyming couplet all thought of plot or poetry is swept away by the pantomime antics of the cast. Stephen Rea gives a brava performance. With mobile eyebrows and more-or-less fixed wig he manages to combine the movements of Groucho Marx with the facial expressions of Jerry Lewis.

This production makes a virtue of extravagant theatricality. The direction by Mark Long and Emil Volk of the People Show maintains a marvellously frantic pace. *High Time* is an agreeable *bonne bouche* to follow *The Riot Act* and it certainly lets the company display their virtuosity. Veronica Quilligan, for example, dances in a most untragic fashion and is magnificently supported - actually as well as dramatically - by Claran Hinds's wonderful Hell's Angel.

are more facetious than frightening.

Griffin's sheer megalomania, Pip Donaghy's nicely judged performance ensures, comes into view only gradually - rather as his physical appearance emerges belatedly in flashback. Knockabout farce yields to murderous violence as Griffin takes shape as an early instance of a type that always both enthralls and enrages Wells: the man determined to dominate the world. Temperamentally attracted to this prospect, Wells intellectually disapproves of it. One of the tenets his writing most consistently preaches is that, for members of a species to survive and thrive, they must co-operate with each other. Griffin, like other Wells protagonists who want world power rather than the World State, tries to defy this law. As Dr Kemp - here portrayed with worried conviction by David Gwillim - points out, "He has cut himself off from his kind."

In Wells's fiction, this alone would ensure some nasty nemesis, but Griffin comes to grief for other reasons too. While fuelled by Wells's own frangible eagerness to escape irritating restrictions, he's unlike him in his naïve, indeed psychotic, assumption that this is totally possible. Disappearing from view, Griffin

believes, will give him absolute liberty; but with the realism that always gives substance to Wells's fantasies, he is shown as impeded by unanticipated limitations. The British climate makes unclouded invisibility as chilly an experience for Griffin as it's chilling to his victims. The need to eat - an imperative to which Wells always devotes keen attention - also creates difficulties. Griffin is troubled by a particularly embarrassing digestive problem: until his food has been digested and assimilated, it remains conspicuously visible - a phenomenon the television serial illustrates in an absorbing sequence where mouthfuls of munched chicken make their disintegrating way down a see-through gullet.

Such drawbacks, the work demonstrates, limit Griffin's autonomy. Because of them, despite his god-like posturings, he needs other people. His attempts to ignore physical - as well as social and moral - laws lead to his inevitable defeat. Scrupulous and exuberant, this dramatization brings this out. It's to be commended not just for the skill with which it makes Griffin's invisibility transparently obvious but also for its concern to ensure that Wells's underlying aims are kept in view.

Ragtime rag-bag

Wilfrid Mellers

ERNST KRENEK
Johnny Strikes Up
Grand Theatre, Leeds

First produced in Leipzig in 1927, Kronek's *Johnny spielt auf* enjoyed a fabulous success as a *scandale*, being presented in more than fifty opera houses during its first year. After that it sank stonily if not without trace; the contrast with Weill's roughly contemporary music-theatre pieces is striking. Both Kronek and Weill were Teutonically trained professional composers who youthfully attained fame and fortune by flirting with (in the strict sense) vulgar musics appropriate to the "decadence" of the Weimar Republic; both were exiled from Nazi Germany to America. The difference between them is the disparity between the chalk of Kronek's talent and the whiffy cheese of Weill's genius, wherein maggots mutate into germs of new life.

New life in a new world is the overt theme of *Johnny Strikes Up*, although unlike Weill's pieces it has no overt politics. That the opera should surface in 1984 is presumably attributable to current nostalgia for the era of the First World War and its aftermath. A more interesting question is whether we may detect, from this revival by Opera North, conducted by David Pryce-Jones and produced by Anthony Besch, any explanation of its initially "prodigious" success. An obvious reason is that its theme was live on the mark, revelling in past excesses while offering illusorily hopeful panaceas. The old world is represented by frigidly glacial mountains and by Max, an "intellectual" German composer of grandly European operas who is in part, Kronek confesses, a self-portrait. The new world is personified by Johnny, a Negro musician-entertainer whose music rekindles defunct but still smouldering fires in Anita, an opera singer whom Max loves rather less than his ice-bound mountain peaks.

She also has an affair with Daniello, an effete Italian violin virtuoso whose instrument Johnny lusts after rather more than he lusts after Anita. The plot of the composer's idiotically corny libretto hinges on banky-panky with Daniello's "old" violin and Anita's "new" banjo. After elaborately symbolic misadventures, the new wins out. Johnny jazzes on the priceless ancient fiddle, musically reanimating "Europe"; the moribund composer, nervously negotiating a Charleston, is presumptively but improbably renewed, in the New World, with his glamorous girl.

Another reason for the piece's 1920s triumph was its very eclecticism. Theatrically, it veers between grand opera, musical comedy and cinematic slapstick; musically, Kronek responds with facility, melling Puccinian lyrical panache with nigger-minstrel effervescence, Ravellian (or Massenet-like?) sensuousness with arid Hindemithian bustle. This eclecticism is not in itself to be deplored since it is what the opera is about: the new world is fashioned from a ragbag of cultures as German expressionism, Parisian Dada and American movie collage coexist with the realism of the newspaper - as they still do in the world around us. Contemporary opinion found this deliciously shocking, both morally and technically. It no longer shocks us, since Kronek's talent was not potent enough to fuse the elements, as does Janáček in *Šaun*, a far more highly charged, partly autobiographical, opera about a composer, which we've recently experienced. In comparison, Kronek's theatrical expertise, dazzling at Leipzig in 1927, is a damp squib at Leeds in 1984, notwithstanding an inventive production. Stephen Matson's lighting, Howard Eaton's visual projections and Terry Gilbert's choreography are always stimulating, sometimes beautiful; orchestral playing and acting are animated; singing is adequate, and more than that in Jonathan Sprague's Johnny. What makes the production fall flat in more than one sense is Kronek's feeble music in which the promise of a Puccinian Big Time fails to materialize; in which the musical comedy numbers don't echo in mind and senses, as do those of Kern or Berlin, not to mention Gershwin; and in which the ragtime

cavortings lack the tension between line and beat which is the heart of jazz - though there are intermittently enlivening burps from trumpet and trombone. At best, we're carried along on the production's romping ebullience; at worst corn non-satirically comes into its own, with comic policemen and with a celestial chorus in the mountains as the despairful composer threatens suicide but tiresomely changes his mind. This very German composer - understandably sung with desperation by Kenneth Woolam - suffices to explain the young's disaffection with the Old World.

Kronek, however, was not thus disenchanting. Geographically, both he and Weill landed up in the New World. Weill, whose German music-theatre had been at once an end and a beginning, worked effectively on Broadway and in Hollywood; Kronek, during his forty American years, has produced post-Schoenbergian, well-crafted, rigorously serial music untainted by his environment - even when setting a catalogue of place-names of railway stations on the Santa Fe Trail. Serialism - however abominated by Hitler for its formalistic decadence - proved for Kronek not an aspiration towards freedom but an imposed European Law analogous to the Roman Catholicism he also espoused. Yet although Kronek didn't practice what his Johnny preached, he had a right to his defences and, ballasted by a small if ardent following, has preserved in his American music an integrity which Johnny didn't need. Even so, I'll hazard that Weill's American musicals will outlast Kronek's American string quartets; and I'm certain that there is more musical substance in Weill's "Alabama Song" than in the whole of Kronek's opera.

Unexpected dimensions

Frances Spalding

Mary Martin
Tate Gallery

Intellectual strait-jackets are currently out of fashion in art. Yet the tradition of working within extreme limitations is of major importance, and has sustained a "constructive" approach that descends via Cubism, De Stijl, Russian Constructivism and the Bauhaus to the English Constructivists who first emerged in the 1950s. In 1978 the Arts Council *Constructive Context* exhibition proved that the tradition still flourishes in Britain, producing an art that, at one level, satisfies a native love of understatement and orderliness. Spare, disciplined and systematic, it inclines to tightness and bland self-sufficiency, but always concentrates looking and can excite. Because it shuns all distractions, not least the clamour of expressionism and pictorial virtuosity, Mary Martin's art, in 1984, offers positive and provocative relief.

Hung chronologically, the exhibition charts a vein that she explored with no loss of intensity from 1951 until her death in 1969. If Victor Pasmore led the return to abstraction in the post-1945 period, Mary Martin was the first wholly to abandon painting for relief. In this she, like other Constructivists, was following the ideas of Charles Biederman, who believed that painting could go no further; the next logical step was from illusionism to actuality, from the flat surface to the use of real materials in real space. The title of Mary Martin's first relief - "Columbarium" - would suggest that its starting point lay outside itself, in the concept of a niched wall for housing clerical urns. But all her subsequent reliefs are generated from an internal logic: based first on proportional systems, then on mathematical permutations which control the changing positions of an unchanging unit.

"Columbarium" is clumsily incised into plaster. It looks tentative but it is a key work, containing already those limitations that proved inexhaustible: grid format, geometry and shallow space measured by a tilted plane. For Martin the essence of relief lay in the "partitioning of space into a surface". Having

In a fool's purgatory

Michael Tanner

GIACOMO PUCCINI
Madam Butterfly
Coliseum

No repertory opera more readily calls forth routine responses than *Madam Butterfly*. Regarded by many highbrows as a musical equivalent of *Love Story*, it has for eighty years packed opera houses with sentimentalists whose reactions to it may well be indistinguishable from those provoked by that notorious film. Both opera and film are regarded as the best thing going in their respective genres of the weepie, and require no further thought.

The new production of *Butterfly* at the Coliseum by Graham Vick succeeds in putting a stop to all that. If there are other ways in which it doesn't succeed we must still be grateful that at last we have been made to think about a work that previously we have been content merely to feel about. Indeed, the English National Opera has put out so much "literature" on the opera that one goes to the performance, if one has prepared conscientiously for it, in hardly less confused a state of mind than if one were attending *Parsifal*. Is Pinkerton an *homme moyen sensuel*, with whom any male member of the audience ought painfully to identify, or is he an example of patronizing colonialism at its nineteenth-century worst? Is he a roué or a boastful, relatively inexperienced youngster, unaware of what harm he has it in his power to do? Is Butterfly herself a victim of male manipulation, or trapped in self-regarding delusion (as Graham Vick suggests in an interview in the excellent *ENO Year-*

book)? Does Kate Pinkerton want to take Butterfly's son away in order to give him a better chance in life than he'd have in down-at-heel Nagasaki, or can't she bear Pinkerton to have any connections that aren't transportable to the United States? The fact that these and other questions can and should be asked guarantees nothing, of course, as to the quality of the work, but it does at least show that the traditional responses of mindless wallowing or contemptuous rejection aren't adequate, and that Puccini is possibly dealing with more complex issues than he has been given credit for.

In the theatrical event, these questions are not resolved, partly because of the elaborately mystifying production. But before coming to that, it must be said that musically the evening is a triumph. Responsibility for that goes in the first place to the conductor John Mauceri, whose pacing and understanding of Puccini's masterly and highly original orchestration are faultless, though it's a pity that Butterfly's entry takes place almost entirely so far offstage that its customary overwhelming impact is lessened. That could be a planned effect, since at every point the conducting is concerned to underline the harshness and pain that pervade the score; this is particularly true of the love-duet, which performed in this way banishes all thoughts of orgasms, and replaces them by something much more like premonitory anguish, which is consonant both with Butterfly's words and with the orchestral postlude to the First Act. And the playing of the rest of the work continuously, Puccini's original scheme which he rejected after the fiasco of its première, enormously heightens the tension of Butterfly's vigil, and serves to emphasize the drastic originality of what is virtually a monodrama, three times as long as Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and proportionately harrowing. Mauceri is fortunate to have singers who can cope with his demands for intensity, and I suspect that if one merely listened to the performance it would be shattering. To invert the old jibe: Puccini is the Berg of Italian opera.

Unfortunately the production, though it is full of interesting touches, too often bewilders in an unprofitable way. Apart from the flowers, it is almost entirely monochromatic. This extends even to the colour of Butterfly's son's hair. He is a pure Japanese child (the actor is the most sophisticated performer on the stage, riveting but a little too knowing, and certainly not only two years old) so that when Butterfly refers ecstatically to his golden locks one wonders if she is in a state of perpetual hallucination, until Sharpless refers to them too; since this is a crucial moment in the opera, what point can be being made? More generally, Stefanos Lazaridis's set is on two levels, the lower one representing reality, in the form of a progressively more squalid and impoverished room, with a muddy garden approach and stepping-stones on which the characters slither. The upper level is sometimes simply blackness, but periodically opens like a lens shutter to reveal shadows on a white screen, fantasies or memories of Butterfly, or Pinkerton embracing Kate, or simply the white screen. All that didn't do anything for me, nor, I suspect, for Puccini. And the effect is to distract attention from Butterfly, the last thing a production should try to do.

The idea seems to be that Butterfly is living in a fool's purgatory, but surely that is wrong. She is horribly mistaken in thinking that her unflinching devotion will be rewarded, but her capacity to confront the truth and her moral grandeur - fully realized in Puccini's noble music - give her a stature that the production denies her. We aren't even allowed to see her die, and Pinkerton's final futile cries are shouted over his son's head as he gathers him in his arms to carry him off back home. That, and the unsystematic restoration of the original text, make Pinkerton wholly loathsome; whereas, to answer the first question I posed, surely the point is that he is no worse than average, that he did feel everything that he told Butterfly he felt at the time, but that he is as casually callous as people normally are. It is Butterfly herself who is a convincing tragic creation; so that this work, uniquely among Puccini's operas, is a masterpiece. This production allows us to hear that but not to see it.

Witness to the real thing

Hugh Haughton

PENELOPE FITZGERALD
Charlotte Mew and her Friends
240pp. Collins. £12.95.
0002170086

When invited to have her portrait painted, Charlotte Mew refused to sit. Similarly when the *Sphere* wrote for a photograph she couldn't oblige ("Poor Auntie hasn't one"), and when *Poems For Today* asked for biographical details, it turned out she hadn't any of these either. Even her closest friends like Alida Monro, who later wrote the invaluable memoir which introduced the 1953 *Collected Poems*, seem to have been kept in the dark about central strands of her life. After her death the locked trunks which were assumed to be full of stacks of MSS salted away were found to be largely empty.

None of this makes life easy for the biographer of the poet whom Hardy called "far and away the best living woman poet" and Virginia Woolf thought "very good and interesting and unlike anyone else". Penelope Fitzgerald's title, *Charlotte Mew and her Friends*, recognizes the problem and suggests her particular solution to it. Her biography not only follows the thin thread of the poet's uneventful and sparsely documented life, but interweaves it with a deft, novelistic evocation of the literary milieu she found herself part of in Edwardian and Georgian London, and the biographies of her closest friends. With the exception of a couple of semi-fictional memoirs of childhood servants, Mew left no extended account of her own life, and for all the nervous pulse of confessionality in her poems, none of them speaks directly of her own experience or in her own person, though all of them resonate with an eerie sense of first-hand experience. If in life Mew maintained a ferocious reticence and a mask of impeccable respectability, her poems speak another language.

In a most explanatory moment, writing a letter to a friend after the eventual publication of her first and most famous book of poems (she was almost fifty when *The Farmer's Bride* came out in 1916), Mew outlined what seems to be a most unreticent and dangerously heart-on-sleeve personal theory of poetry. What she sought, she said, was to give voice to a *cri de coeur* of some kind, the moment when a person's hidden self finds effective utterance in a language wrested from them by the pressure of feeling or circumstance—the moment in fact of reluctance overcome. As examples of what she had in mind she gives Marguerite Gautier's "Je veux vivre" and Mrs Gamp's "Drink fair, Betsy, wotever you do", and from her own observation she quotes the words of a harassed mother-in-law as she clouted her little daughter in Camden Town: "Now go and make yer bloody happy life miserable and stop yer bloody jaw." Poems should recreate not only the cry but "the gesture and the accent" (the theory bears some affinity with Stephen Dedalus's contemporary ideas about "epiphany") and so one goes on: "the letter goes on, using a grand phrase that incongruously suggests the idiom and accent of Henry James, 'calling up witnesses to the real thing'."

The real thing in her poems—as in her life—was mainly grim. The witnesses for whom and through whom she spoke in the quietly unhinged monologues like "The Farmer's Bride", and "Madeleine in Church" which are her most distinctive achievement speak, as if under hypnosis, a language both lucid and askew, giving broken testimony of broken lives and disappointing places ("rooms where for good or ill things died"). Her range of situations is narrow and the company claustrophobic: a quiet house, a graveyard, an empty street, a deserted church, and a voice speaking of or to an inaccessible presence—a dead fiancée, an estranged bride, a woman passing in the street, a boy in an asylum. They are speakers for whom the real, for one reason or another, is out of reach—and out of earshot—and the poems have an uneasy knack of evoking the immediacy of nothing happening ("Day follows day / The same, or now and then, a different grey"). Fitzgerald calls her a poet of "delayed shock", and most of the subjects of her miniature studies in "hysteria" are suffering

something like the civilian equivalent of shell-shock: a boy going to pieces on his girlfriend's grave ("There is something horrible about a flower"), a woman wasting away in her father's house ("But everything has burned and not quite through"), the farmer, bewildered by his sexually fascinating young bride's sexual rejection of him "and all things human", left fixated on the image of her marvellous hair:

She sleeps up in the attic there
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair
Between us. Oh! my God! the down,
The soft young down of her, the brown,
The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!
Her best poetry fastens on "real things" like that hair, with the precision of contemporary Imagists, but infuses them with a vividness and an almost fetishistic intensity born of the inner history of the speaker: "To-day the brown tide splashes, step by step, the river stair", winter light breaking through "frosted window-lace",



shadows which "every hour slant across the hedge a different way", "Two blue hydrangeas by the blistered door burned brown"—precise records of outer as well as inner weathering. But it is on the precise recording of voice above all that her poems depend for their evocation of "the real thing". Like the examples in her letter, they favour English dialect (like the farmer's faint burr) or else a whiff of French ("But, oh! ma Doué! the nights of Hell!", "Seigneur mon Dieu! the sacred soul of spels!"), distancing their speakers from the author—as if RP were just too close to home (Mew told Sydney Cockerell that she would be francophone given the chance of reincarnation). In life she maintained a rigid persona as "Miss Lott" or "Auntie Mew", but the poems thrive on an intimate ventriloquism, which enabled her to talk with immediacy from the mouth of a lonely schoolboy in a French boarding-school, or a faded prostitute or a man of the world on the Quai Voltaire ("Pouah! These women and their nerves!"), and to dramatize their *cri de coeur* with disturbing directness—like the boy at his girl's fresh grave whispering "I am scared, I am staying with you tonight—/Put me to sleep". Those in the audience at her extraordinary readings at the Poetry Bookshop were astonished by the degree to which Mew seemed possessed, as if entirely taken over by a distinct personality, body, soul, and voice, while reading. The mystic Evelyn Underhill described the effect as like "having whisky with tea—my feet were clean off the floor". This isn't a bad description of the effect of the poems themselves, with their queer, hallucinatory ordinariness.

Penelope Fitzgerald's biography goes a long way towards explaining the unhappy consciousness described in the poems. On the face of things Mew's was a rather dull and conventional spinster's life lived in the bosom of the family (she never left home) and on the fringes of literary London, mainly in Bloomsbury. Her father married the boss's daughter and found himself a partner in the thriving architect's firm of Henry Kendall, with a successful line in country mansions. Gothic Elizabethan schools and domestic Elizabethan lunatic asylums. Her mother Anna Maria was proud of her Kendall blood and conscious of her social superiority

her husband Fred; after the decline in the family's fortunes she seems to have sacrificed everything to the transcending ideals of a good name, a life of genteel invalidism, and a good address, mainly at 9 Gordon Street. Charlotte had a conventional middle-class girl's upbringing, and after schooling in Gower Street, launched herself as a writer with a promising Nineties story about a dying London prostitute which appeared in the fashionable *Yellow Book*. After the Wilde scandal she published her pieces in the duller *Temple Bar* and seemed set for a successful career as a writer of fiction. Somehow this never materialized (Val Warner's edition of the prose shows the technical reasons, in particular the failure to establish a convincing authorial voice, the very thing which lifts the poems). She went on writing, but as an amateur, and continued to live at home in Bloomsbury with her aged mother, her artist sister Anne and the crusty family parrot Wek, enjoying the friendship and patronage of successful literary women like May Sinclair and Mrs "Sappho" Dawson Scott. As a result of occasional poems in the papers, she became associated with the Poetry Bookshop run by Harold and Alida Monro, financed by money from the family's private asylum in Scotland; and finally published *The Farmer's Bride* to some acclaim in 1916. After its republication in the early 1920s in England and America, she was awarded a Civil List pension on the recommendation of Hardy, de la Mare and Masfield.

But that is only half the picture revealed in Fitzgerald's deft, novelistic account of Mew's "singular double personality" (the words are Monro's again). The other half is another story. Though her life was lived in the bosom of a respectable professional family, the life of the family was overshadowed by its family secrets. The unmentionable skeletons in the Mew closet were broadly those of their class—financial failure, sexual "abnormality" and madness. Even Charlotte's closest friends were kept in the dark about these things. Few were even allowed to know that the Mews were actually living in some poverty behind the respectable façade of 9 Gordon Street—and were secretly taking lodgers. None of the family was much of a financial success and after the death of his partner Mr Mew's career petered out, ending in obscurity, neglect and personal failure. After his death Charlotte managed the house on diminishing funds, and with the help of her sister, spent the rest of her life trying to nurse and support her formidable mother, a permanent invalid with no definable illness; Edith Sitwell saw the poet as a grey and tragic woman "sucked dry of blood (though not of spirit) by an arachnoid mother". Mrs Mew's brother seems to have suffered from mental illness and this Kendall legacy of madness and gentility cast a darker shadow over the household. Charlotte's eldest brother, Henry, the white hope of the family business, and her youngest sister, Freda, described as beautiful "like a flame", underwent severe nervous breakdowns in the 1890s; were diagnosed as suffering from *dementia praecox* and hospitalized as private patients for the rest of their lives. Charlotte's poems on hospitalization of the insane, "Ken" and "On the Asylum Road", though impressively free of explicit autobiographical reference, suggest the traumatic effect of what her biographer calls the "sad exit into separation and silence". "On the Asylum Road" speaks of "a house whose windows—every pane / Are made of darkly stained or clouded glass" and "Ken" of "that red brick barn upon the hill" where her modern Wordsworthian idiot boy is locked away:

So, when they took
Ken to that place, I did not look
After he called and turned on me
His eyes. These Lullaby trees—
The poems do not need to name the "place" but give vivid accounts of the violence implicit in the incarceration of the insane. "Ken" in fact was rejected by his first editor on the grounds that the magazine "believed in the segregation of the feeble-minded". Export medical opinion declared the poet herself to be mad on the evidence of the strange "Forest Road" ("There is a shadow there: I see my soul / I hear my soul, singing among the trees"), and this currency of Galton's eugenically slanted ideas on "moral inheritance" in Charlotte and her sister

decide that they had no right to marry (Galton's labs in University College were presumably just round the corner from the Mews in Gordon Street). Charlotte's poems, with their ability to project into the voices of the estranged, their sympathy with those incarcerated, whether in a "Quiet House" or a boarding school or hospital, and their air of self-dissociation, reveal a profound sense of affinity with her separated siblings.

They also show an obsessive identification with the Magdalen figure of the fallen woman as in "La Pécheresse". Mew had another, perhaps deeper reason for not marrying, and another unmentionable secret. She was a homosexual. As a schoolgirl she developed a crush on her teacher Lucy Harrison (an idealistic lesbian who later became headmistress of the Mount School, York), and this was followed by intense but unreciprocated love-affairs with Ella D'Arcy of *The Yellow Book* and the brilliant novelist (and pioneer of British psychoanalysis) May Sinclair. Unfortunately neither the uninhibited Nineties Woman nor the founder of the Medico-Psychological Clinic could respond to or understand Mew's erotic needs. Ironically it was the latter, a novelist whose fiction was often avowedly feminist in form, who was so shocked when Mew made an advance to her in her bedroom that she spread the story all round town that she had been assaulted by a "Lesbian Poetess". Though Mew's life was dominated by warm friendship with many women like Alida Monro (whose husband was homosexual) and Florence Hardy, such rejection of her passionate sexual feelings surely contributed to her identification with the guilty and sexually thwarted lovers in her poems ("the spirit afterward, but first the touch") as well as to their marvellous, weirdly charged view of women's eyes and hair. None of the poems is overtly Sapphic, yet her homosexuality surely contributed to the complex sympathies of her masterpieces, "The Farmer's Bride"—which understands both the farmer's frustrated desire for his young wife and her recoil from his male touch—and "Madeleine in Church" with its mix of sensualism and regretful narcissism (the Methodist typesetter thought it blasphemous libel and refused to print it).

Having watched her mother and then sister die, Charlotte, finally alone in the world, became obsessed with some little black spot in her studio (apparently soot), and, in the throes of desolating grief and guilt, took refuge in a nursing-home in Baker Street. The medical specialist she consulted advised her to follow the family tradition, have herself confined and enter an asylum. She refused, preferring the older, more effective refuge. She bought a bottle of the household disinfectant Lysol—"the cheapest poison available" as Fitzgerald says—and committed suicide. A newspaper reported the suicide of one Charlotte Mew, "said to be a writer".

Fitzgerald's book is an intelligent and readable portrait of a difficult, self-thwarting, but highly gifted writer and her circle of friends. Her accounts of the poems are consistently sensitive, her novelistic paraphrases drawing out the poet's real psychological insights. But she doesn't ever try to do for the poems what she does for the person—to look at them in relation to the work of her contemporaries. This is a pity, since though excluded from the Georgian Anthologies by Eddie Marsh in favour of one Friedegond Shove, her poetry is very much part of the quiet revolution occurring in England at this time. It belongs to the new poetry of vernacular speech, and associated with the names of Hardy, Frost and Edward Thomas; Her best poems, however, stand with the best of *Salvage of Circumstances*, written at this time (as a study of failed marital intimacy "The Farmer's Bride" predates "Home Burial") and suggest some affinity with the nervy, champagne-politain and conversational poems of Ford, and even with "Pityrock" but, her poetry is still unlike anyone else's and Penelope Fitzgerald's book is a welcome reminder of its still neglected vitality—as well as of the thwarted life of its author, who wrote, "il faut écouter le cœur quand il pleure" and "il faut écouter le cœur quand il pleure" and a meaning beyond the

Encounters with familiar ghosts

Blake Morrison

SEAMUS HEANEY
Station Island
123pp. Faber. £5.95 (paperback, £2.95).
0571 133010
Sweeney Astray
85pp. Faber. £6.95 (paperback, £2.95).
0571 133606

In the middle of the first part of *Station Island* comes a poem, "Making Strange", in which Seamus Heaney is himself characteristically caught midway: he has brought a visitor to his rural birthplace and they have come across one of the natives:

I stood between them,
the one with his travelled intelligence
and tawny containment,
his speech like the twang of a bowstring,

and another, unshorn and bewildered
in the tubs of his wellingtons,
smiling at me for help,
faced with this stranger I'd brought him.

We can take this both as a real encounter and as a parable of the poet's divided self. On the one side is the literary and sophisticated global village into which Heaney has graduated, its representative a fast and witty talker with a resonant (American?) accent, "tawny" because tanned but also perhaps with the owlish appearance of an intellectual. On the other is the parish Heaney has left behind, its shy occupant "unshorn" (long-haired and sheepish), clumping in his wellingtons, which are, however, "lubs"—in which much can grow or be fruitfully contained. The speaker, hovering between these two men (or inner men), seeks a means to bring them together or at least not betray either one. He does so through the agency of his reconciling muse, "a cunning middle voice" that comes out of the field and which enjoins him to merge the adeptness of the first with the dialect of the second. This intervention works miracles, for the poem ends with the poet not torn and embarrassed but triumphant, "adept at dialect", taking pride in his homeland while also seeing it through the eyes of an outsider—a homely, best-of-both-worlds *ostranenie*.

Though not an especially distinguished poem, "Making Strange" is what we have come to recognize as typically Heaney-ish, examining the varieties of division, weighing loyalties, puzzling through some moral dilemma in a scrupulous, commonplace tone. Christopher Ricks has called Heaney "the most trusted poet in our islands", meaning that he can be trusted not only to write good poems but to tell the truth. "Dependable" and "reliable" are words he uses in *Station Island*, and in one sequence he describes various bits of stone he carries with him as keepsakes, talismans of trustworthiness. His own reputation is rather like this: Irish, British and (increasingly) American readers have come to rely on having him around; we depend on him to charm us with stony truths.

But a reputation like this can also be a lead weight. For him, doing the decent expected thing has sometimes been a strain and he has had to bite the hand that feeds him. And for his readers, trusting him has sometimes meant overlooking elements in his work that are rather less trustworthy and rationalistic: the consultation of omens and oracles; the slyness and stealthiness he admires in others and now locates in himself ("And my stealth was second nature to me, as if I were coming into my own"); above all those spirit-voices, not just in "Making Strange" but throughout his work, heard across the fields, on the wind, out of the earth, admonishing him to do the one thing or the other, lie down in the common-word-board or strike out by himself. Up until now we could take these voices to be a mere poetic convention. And even with *Station Island* we may feel that there's a Hardyesque solidity about Heaney which prevents any awkwardness about whether he is really claiming to have heard voices or seen ghosts. But it is a religious book and no getting round it—intense, superstitious, even mystical, and at times very difficult to decipher. As every new book by a major writer should, it gives us a rather different poet from the one we thought we knew: Heaney has always liked his books to have an unfolding "story" and a meaning beyond the

meanings of individual lyrics. His new one is shaped to suggest a growth away from the reliable and familiar (the poet as himself) to the masked and alien (the poet as someone else). The miscellaneous lyrics of Part One are, then, recognizable enough: we get roughly what we were expecting, though a bit less than we might have hoped. An erotic memory in which sex becomes a kind of sacrament, Lawrence with Catholic knobs on ("first coldness of the under-breast / like a ciborium in the palm"); a superb evocation of a bat hanging under a railway bridge with its "babynails" and silky rustlings, Lawrence again in parts but outdoing his bat poem, anthologized by Heaney in *The Rattle Bag*; an anecdote of a flitting Irish family—there is little here that can't be happily assimilated. Other poems are familiar because they echo, perhaps too closely, earlier treatments of the same theme. Eating lobsters in "Away from it all", Heaney sounds much as he did when he ate oysters in *Field Work* and lets the meal become a similarly conscience-laden, question-filled debate on politics and aesthetics; remembering an old smoothing-iron, he is pressed back to the kitchen of "Sunlight" coming up old Mr Gallagher, "his trouser bottoms wet / and flecked with grass seed"; he pays his respects to another of those silent, staring countrymen, first met in *Death of a*

Naturalist, who are dying along with their trades.

Much of the atmosphere is rural and Hardy-esque, and there is a poem about Hardy's birthplace, crossed with memories of a marital fracas. But the rude modern world breaks in. In "An Ulster Twilight", there's a marvellous olfactory reminiscence, all wood shavings and linseed oil, of a handyman neighbour, Eric Dawson, hard at work with plane and fretsaw on a battleship which is to be the boy Heaney's Christmas present. But like several of the poems in *Station Island*, this one has been revised and made less innocent since its original appearance and it ends by alluding to sectarian realities to which polite neighbourly conversation cannot allude:

if we met again
In an Ulster twilight we would begin
And end whatever we might say
In a speech all toys and carpentry,

A doorstep courtesy to shun
Your father's uniform and gun,
But—now that I have said it out—
Maybe none the worse for that.

Heaney here says it out but feels a little ashamed of having done so: saying nothing, whatever you say, is a habit he sympathizes with, and there are fewer plain-speaking poems in *Station Island* than in *North or Field*

Work. We may also feel, though, that there are the beginnings of a deeper plumbing of the self. In the fine sequence called "Shelf Life" Heaney measures himself against metal and stone, defining his mineral being. What he admires and might like to be is a piece of granite, "jaggy, salty, punitive / and exacting". But he is not made of such mettle: "com-plaisant", he owns up to a love of "placid" and "unshowy" pewter, his "soft option" in every sense. The tone is apologetic and awkward, but having spun us gently along Heaney then hits us with an apologetic:

Glimmerings are what the soul's composed of.
Fogged-up challenges, far conscience-glitters
and hang-dog, half-truth earnest of true love.
And a whole late-flooding thaw of ancestors.

Bad poetry contents itself with earnest half-truths; Heaney's poetry prefers the way of "half-truth earnestness". The aesthetic he finds in poetry is reminiscent of his evocation of a bat—a "slither of illiteracy under rafters", all rust-les and glimpses, sly and secretive yet finally with "nothing to hide". This sounds traditionally Romantic, and Heaney has a Romantic impulse to enter that region of sensations, reflexes and half-memories which cannot be clearly expressed in language—what he calls "a limbo of lost words". Poe described this region as one of "psychal impressions": "a class of

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fancies, of exquisite delicacy, which are not thoughts" but rather "shadows of shadows" and which arise "where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the world of sleep". Heaney writes something similar here—"When you are tired or terrified / your voice slips back into its old first place"—but qualifies it with a more Jungian notion: in that old first place lies some collective, tribal, ancestral identity. The closing poems of Part One show Heaney hunting down the "spoor" or "pollen" of this ancestral selfhood, and it is there that we get our first sight of Sweeney, exiled "king of the ditchbacks", who assumes the part of the "guttural muse" or poetic vocation waiting to be discovered by the young poet; when Heaney glimpses him, it is as if he is "coming into my own". The poems make sense as what Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, termed "the call to adventure", the summons or election with which all myths begin: we see the crowned poet set out on a lifetime's quest, "a rich young man / leaving everything he had / for a migrant solitude". Already we are a long way from the idiom with which *Station Island* opens, a joyful piece of myth-making in which Seamus-Orpheus leads his new wife Marie-Eurydice out of the London Underground.

There is to be more about Sweeney in Part Three, but the poet-protagonist must first undergo a pilgrimage. Part Two of the book, the title poem, is a twelve-part sequence set on Station Island on Lough Derg, a place to which Irish Catholics have for centuries journeyed to bare their feet and their souls. Heaney has had an extensive Lough Derg literature to draw on. An early account by Bishop Henry Jones, quoted in William Carleton's famous piece "The Lough Derg Pilgrim", shows that the rituals of continual praying and fasting were by 1647 long-established. In the 1820s the Rev Caesar Otway, also quoted by Carleton, left a more opinionated account: "as stepping out of the boat I planted my foot on the rocks of this scene of human absurdity, I felt ashamed for human nature, and looked on myself as one of the millions of fools that have, century after century, degraded their understandings by coming hither. . . it was filthy, dreary and altogether detestable". This was a Protestant view. But Carleton himself, "the old fork-tongued turncoat", the Catholic who became Protestant partly as a result of his experience on Station Island, was even more scathing in 1829, complaining of a "barbarous" régime and angrily capturing the callous behaviour of one of the priests. Carleton's account nonetheless contains moments of high comedy, as does Sean O'Faolain's story "Lovers of the Lake", set in the recent past: when Jenny, the woman in that story, announces to her lover that she intends to go on a Lough Derg pilgrimage, his reaction is one of benign disbelief.

Do you mean that place with the island where they go around on their bare feet on sharp stones, and starve for days, and sit up all night ologroaning and ologoneing? . . . Are you going religious on me?

Heaney may appear to have gone religious on us for there's a serious, reverent tone to his account, not undercut by the mocking irony of a Carleton or an O'Faolain. Topographically and temporally, his sequence is very precise: we can follow the protagonist on his outward journey, through his fasting, prayer and confession, until he steps ashore again. But it is also a Dantesque poem, a modern *Purgatorio*, "a sequence of dream encounters with familiar ghosts" in which the stories and messages of the dead finally assume more importance than the elaborate theological framework.

The ghosts Heaney meets are a mix of old acquaintances and literary forefathers: Simon Sweeney, "an old Sabbath-breaker", remembered from the poet's youth; William Carleton, encountered on a "high road" near Pettigo, still walking and talking at a fierce pace; a young missionary to Africa, who wonders why Heaney has re-entered Catholic haunts he was "once clear of"; unless you are here taking a last look". Barney Murphy, an old teacher of Heaney's, who prompts him to a rare joke—"You'd have thought that Anahorish school / Was purgatory enough for any man"; Patrick Kavanagh, a shopkeeper-victim of a sectarian killing, knocked awake in the small hours; an archaeologist-friend, dead at thirty-two, met with by the ancient stone circle on the island, St Brigid's Bed; a hunger-striker; James Joyce,

identifiable by his walking-stick, "cunning" and references to Anna Livia Plurabelle. These are on the whole harsh and recriminating ghosts, like Hamlet's father's, and show impatience with their interrogator. When Heaney tries to tell Joyce how important Stephen Dedalus's diary entry for April 13 has been to him, with its revised thoughts on the word "tundish" and on English linguistic colonialism, Joyce snaps back:

'Who cares', he jeered, 'any more? The English language belongs to us. You are raking at dead fires, a waste of time for somebody your age. That subject people stuff is a cod's game, infantile, like your peasant pilgrimage.'

You lose more of yourself than you redeem doing the decent thing. Keep at a tangent. When they make the circle wide, it's time to swim out on your own and fill the element with signatures on your own frequency. echo soundings, searches, probes, allurements . . .

The thought and imagery are a reminder of "Casualty" in *Field Work*, where Heaney describes the exhilaration of getting out into his "proper haunt, somewhere well out, beyond". Colum McCartney, a cousin of Heaney's who also featured in *Field Work*, movingly tended by the poet (as Virgil tended Dante) after his assassination, also makes a reappearance. Like Joyce, he accuses Heaney of failure and compromise—but for opposite reasons: You confused evasion and artistic tact. The Protestant who shot me through the head I accuse directly, but indirectly you who now stay perhaps upon this bed for the way you whitewashed ugliness and drew the lovely blinds of the *Purgatorio* and saccharined my death with morning dew.

This is severe, too severe, as only a poet could be with himself. But McCartney's ghost is right to speak of atonement, which is how much of the poetry in "Station Island" reads: Heaney is here to confess his disloyalties, his failure to be politically committed, his aesthetic waverings and much else. McCartney would have him take a stance but the posture is more a genuflection "among bead clicks", reminiscent at times of the religious awakening and scaring of Stephen in *Portrait of the Artist* ("I thought of walking round / and round a space utterly empty"). Heaney may no longer be a believer in God (his remains a moot—or mute—point in the poem), but neither is he a "lapsed" Catholic—perhaps no Catholic ever is. The rituals of Catholicism with which he surrounds himself in "Station Island" are the latest phase in a lifelong endeavour to explain himself. The conclusions he reaches are much like those he reaches, through different rituals, in "Shelf Life": he tells William Carleton, and to an old footballer-friend, another assassination-victim, he pleads:

'Forgive the way I have lived indifferent— forgive my mild circumspice involvement.'

I surprised myself by saying, 'Forgive my eye,' he said, 'all that's above my head.' And then a stun of pain seemed to go through him and he trembled like a heatwave and faded.

Few ghosts in literature have faded as beautifully as that, not even Hardy's Emma shrinking amid the rain at Castle Boterel. But this ghost bears the marks of his terrible death and we are not allowed to forget them: "His brow was blown open above the eye" we have been told earlier, and this transforms those apparently comforting, exonerating colloquialisms "Forgive my eye" and "all that's above my head" into two of the most unforgiving puns in the English language. But such, it seems, is the fire Heaney must go through each section of the poem is a "station", and before he can leave the island a new man, purged, cleansed and assuaged of guilt, he must undergo punitive disciplines of various kinds. So, for example, the translation of the St John of the Cross poem in Section XI (jokingly passed off as "penance"), is necessary practice for the task of translating himself into the voice of Sweeney in Part III of *Station Island*. Sweeney is the "new man" Heaney becomes, and being him is not incompatible with being himself. This must be what Heaney has in mind when, in a note for the Poetry Book Society Bulletin, he speaks of the "freed voice of the

legendary Sweeney"—freed from the original work in which he appears, as Stoppard freed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from *Hamlet*, but freed, too, as the poet is, from the rigours and atonements of Part Two.

Heaney has long been interested in Sweeney, not least for the rhyme with his own name. His version of the medieval poem *Bulle Suibhne*, based on J. G. O'Keefe's bilingual text of 1913 and published in a limited edition in Ireland last year, now appears in new covers and typeface from Faber. It is an extraordinary tale. Cursed by the cleric Ronan for having thrown a psalter in the lake, Sweeney is turned into a bird at the Battle of Moira and journeys the length and breadth of Ireland, undergoing tests and adventures, enduring madness and spending his time (like Calvino's Baron) in trees. The linking prose sections have some *longueurs* and Heaney admits that it was tempting "to forage for the best lyric moments and to present them as poetic orphans". He was surely right to resist, and to confine himself to only a few minor deletions: what we are given has claims to being one of the great works of medieval literature, and we have it almost in its entirety. In his introduction Heaney speaks of *Sweeney Astray* as having some of the poetic power of *King Lear*, and the theme is similar too: the exiled king reduced to a bare forked animal, getting close to the elements, and learning wisdom through madness:

Over starlit moors and plains, woman plucking my watercress, to his cold and lonely station the shadow of that Sweeney goes

with watercress for his herbs and cold water for his head, bushes for companions, the bare hillside for his bed.

Bewailing his lot, or naming all the trees of Ireland, Sweeney rises to lyric heights. But the most moving incident in the story comes when he is captured by being tricked into believing that his entire family is dead: he withstands the news of the deaths of his brother, father, mother, wife, sister and daughter but when it comes at last to his son—"A haunted father's memory / of his small boy calling Daddyl"—he falls defenceless out of the tree. Even the linking prose narrative contains such touching moments as the one when Sweeney is nourished by the ingenuity of the cook Muirbrig, wife of a swineherd: "Molling ordered his cook to leave aside some of each day's milking for Sweeney's supper . . . she would sink her heel to the ankle in the nearest cow-dung and fill the hole to the brim with new milk. Then Sweeney would sneak into the deserted corner of the milking yard and lap it up."

In taking on *Bulle Suibhne* in its entirety, Heaney has done more than the decent scholarly thing. He has also, no less importantly, left himself free to practise his own inventive glosses, his Sweeney-Heaney, in Part Three of *Station Island*. Translating the poem did not, it seems, exhaust his fellow-feeling—and it is easy to see why. Sweeney fled the sounds of battle to live in exile; his kingdom lay in what is now south County Antrim and north County Down; he is the symbol of a quarrel between the Christian religion and an "older recalcitrant Celtic temperament", as well as between free creative imagination and political or domestic obligation: Heaney tells us all this in his introduction to *Sweeney Astray*, and we understand why he should feel an affinity. But the method of the Sweeney poems in *Station Island* is not to labour these parallels and proximities but to take them as read. The voice we hear is a twin-taxed one, sometimes the medieval note predominant, sometimes the modern, but intertwined so that the voices speak in unison. Often, it must be said, the verse becomes knotted, indivisible, indecipherable: these are Heaney's most difficult poems to date, more arcane even than the prose-poems in *Station*, which they resemble in their crossing of personal (often childhood) experience and historical legend. *Station* owed something to Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*, and so do the Sweeney poems in the way they play off the poet of child-poet against the ancient king. To follow them, we have to keep in mind the narrative of *Bulle Suibhne* and grasp the faint rough progress from Sweeney's "transformation" (or "reincarna-

tion), through tests and trials and a clash with a cleric, to the promise of a final transfiguration and release. At other times it's only the echo of earlier Heaney poems that gives us our bearings: "In the Beech", its speaker posted as a "lookout", is very reminiscent of "The Toome Road" and includes childhood memories of the 1940s ("the pilot with his goggles back came in / so low I could see the cockpit rivets"); "The First Kingdom" recalls other Heaney poems about Roman and British imperialism; "The First Flight" could be read as an account of Heaney's poetic development to date. Then there are other echoes, like "the scribes" in a poem of that title who look as cold and mudgeonly as Yeats's scholars, recently scratching and clawing "in the margin of texts of praise"—these is a "jealous art". And where poems overall defeat us, there are always beautiful flashes of description: sprigs of holly "like smashed bottle-glass", a bird with "white and black tail, like parquet", the "breath and plaster" of a bullocks' drinking place. But the translucent images add up to something opaque—"A Waking Dream", for example:

When I made the rush to throw salt on her tail the long treadles of air took me in my stride so I was lofted beyond exerted breath, the cheep and blur of trespass and occurrence. As if one who had dropped off came to suspecting the very stillness of the sunlight.

That is the whole poem, and though it has the word "dream" in its title it is not significantly at odds with the rest of the poems in this section, except perhaps in the ungainly abundance of monosyllables in its first three lines. The imagery of these poems is Skeltonian and bare, and their allegorical tapestry (as in a poem where different birds represent different human characteristics) plain and medieval. Yet for all the simple texture, they simply ask too much. It isn't that the writing lacks pressure but, on the contrary, that it doesn't let off enough steam.

In this, then, Heaney astray? It depends how seriously we take the structure of *Station Island*. In past collections, Heaney's concluding poems have prefigured those of the next—*Field Work*, for example, ended with a translation of Dante, a portent of the Dantean "Station Island"—but if the last poems here are intended (and they seem to be) as the culmination of the "growth of the poet's mind" and initiation of his new self, then most readers will want to send Heaney scurrying back to *North* or even *Death of a Naturalist*. If, however, we forget the book's portentous structure and see it as consisting of a central long poem flanked by two batches of rather uneven lyrics, we can relax: "Station Island" is a marvellous new sequence which surpasses even *North* and *Field Work*.

And perhaps Heaney can and should relax too. He has been encouraged, both within and outside Ireland, to take his responsibilities very seriously, and the question of where those responsibilities lie—to the nation? to the tribe? to the Church? to art alone?—has become one of his main themes. But there is a moment when *gravitas* becomes hubris, and Heaney's perorations on his muse, his calling, his election and his crowning are in danger of looking over-solemn—particularly when contrasted with the wary, laconic, take-it-or-leave-it-art of his fellow Ulsterman Paul Muldoon, which deflates grand talk about the poet as historical sage or national redeemer. It is a difficult matter. Heaney is a naturally modest poet, with a declared hatred for "a *mol* situation, an egotism, a presumption". But an argument has surfaced here and there in his work about the entanglement of humility with "servility", with the tongue-tied "servitude of the Irish peasant, the abjectness of a colonial slave-class, the bowing down of a subject people. Stealth is one form of self-assertion, and Heaney has always been a stealthier poet than he's taken for. But now he seems prepared to risk presumption as a necessary process of freeing his voice. The products are as yet unconvincing—he will have to wait for them to sink in, as another famous Faber poet had to, with his Sweeney poems, once thought cold and arid but now looked on more kindly. Heaney, like Eliot, may turn out simply to be one step ahead of his readers. But I can't help hoping that the future lies with a solid, shareable myth like "Station Island" and with the scroll-work of Part Three.

Tricks and treats

David Bromwich

CRAIG RAINE
Rich
109pp. Faber. £5.95.
0571 132154

Craig Raine's early poems belonged to a sub-genre that the Germans call "thing-poems". They dealt with such things as "Misericords", "Houses in North Oxford" and, making allowances for compound entities, "The Fair in St. Giles" and "Demolition with Tobacco Speck". Other poems, close to these in simplicity, made up a sequence on tradesmen, including "The Butcher", "The Barber" and "The Ice Cream Man". A second sequence took as its subjects Pre-Raphaelite paintings with self-explanatory titles: "The Horse", "Sports Day in the Park", "The Home for the Elderly" and so forth. The mode that Raine adopted for these forth-coming poems was not quite naturalistic. And yet, one never came to know the poet himself through the traits or associations of the things he described. The preferred tone was abstract, with an occasional reassuring touch of intimacy; and when a poem reached a climax of some sort, it gave notice with a mildly out-of-place simile: the barber who "massages the scalp like a concert pianist"; the grocer who "smiles like a modest quattrocento Christ". Elsewhere the same effect was produced with a more self-conscious air: "the cobs of corn / are similes for nooses neatly tied"—which is very like saying, "Look, this is how poetry gets written".

From other poems in his first book, *The Onion*, *Memory*, it appeared that Raine was also a confessional poet. But, though in certain respects his work was modelled on Lowell's and Plath's—in diction, cadence and the routine use of hyperbolic figures—it adapted their procedure to essentially different ends. Plath aimed to be a repulsive writer: "I am a harem— / My head a moon / Of Japanese paper". Whatever one made of the style, it had a motive. The "I" claimed attention as a special case. Yet here is Raine, in what seems to be a similar key: "Bread develops slowly under the gill, / a Polaroid picture of desert / above it; the air is almost in tears". He has taken over the sensitive-heartless style, but without the motive: for him it is a way of being clever about a piece of toast. Indeed, Raine's poetry from the start affected to be affectless. But the title poem of his second book, *A Martian Sends a*

Postcard Home, offered a new set of credentials for his usual practices, by presenting a fair specimen of the author's own voice as an inter-planetary monologue. In this way the slightly strange borrowed gravity of the estranged. The "Postcard", however, was only the earlier "Enquiry into Two Inches of Ivory", under a gimmicky wrapping. Thus between his first two books, Raine's chief advance was a deepening facility. In both, "I" was mostly absent. When he did appear—"It is the onion, memory / that makes me cry"—he was apt to sink into bathos.

In avoiding, as far as possible, the risks of confessional poetry, Raine up to now has avoided most of its vices and virtues. One is therefore surprised to find that the longest single item in *Rich* is a prose memoir of his childhood and family. The pattern for this, in a fairly obvious but unimportant way, is Lowell's memoir in *Life Studies*. Yet here the differences all work in Raine's favour. He writes from a steadier attachment than Lowell, and his prose is much less mannered. He is able to treat his parents, not as queer obstacles to his development, who must accordingly somehow be talked about, but rather as persons altogether discrete from himself, whose uniqueness he comes to feel the more strongly as he writes. His father was a boxer when young, and then a bomb armourer for the RAF, before being invalidated out with epilepsy ("the result, we think, of an explosion in a munitions factory"). The description of a fit is vivid, without either callousness or sentimentality:

I was never aware of being frightened as a child because I saw his fits many times. My mother would take the three heavy cushions from the hide sofa and lay them on the floor. Then, her arms under his and locked on his chest, she'd drag my father's dead weight from wherever he'd fallen over to the cushions. She'd take off his shoes and his tie, open his shirt and loosen his waistband. Then we'd wait. For ten to twenty minutes he would lie there without moving, except for one eyebrow which flaged up and down while his mouth twitched sideways. Suddenly he'd arch his back like a twig in a furnace, scraping his stockinged feet for purchase, then take his head in both hands and try to smash it on the floor, only prevented by the cushions. And he would scream. The screams were the worst part. A priest who happened to be visiting my mother volunteered to stay on one of these occasions, but the screams drove him out.

When he subsided after five minutes, he'd lie with his eyes wide open but unfocused, weeping. My mother would hitch up her skirt and straddle his chest. With her face close to his, she'd say, "Knobser, Knobser, Knobser, Knobser," in a gentle voice until

his eyes focused and he came back to her with a groan of recognition. "Knobser" was my father's fighting name. "Young 'un", he'd say, and she'd go off to make him a cup of tea.

The writing is sustained like this, calm, disciplined and free of cliché, for twenty-two pages. The memoir comes to a stop arbitrarily, in the middle of Raine's school days, but it ends with a recognition. His father had protected him throughout childhood from every outside assault, with the result that he felt answerable only to his family, and looked on his father as a hero. But among other tricks, "my father had taught me to do a proper somersault", and, away in boarding school, he broke the frame of a bed. The bursar told him that he must be careful thereafter: he was different from the other boys, for his parents could not afford to pay for a new bed. He then took to replying to questions about his father by calling him a football manager, or a brain surgeon: "I was at school for seven years. It wasn't until my second year that I told anything like the truth about my father." In its less abrupt fashion, the memoir itself is a delayed effort to come to grips with the truth. It has perhaps two false touches: an allusion to the town Raine grew up in as "a typical, ugly small town in the north of England" (a judgment more stereotyped than even the town can have been); and an assertion that his father's good stories were "useless as raw material" for poetry (a rather stiff answer to a question nobody asked). Still, the prose that takes up Part II of *Rich* is a success in a venture that simply defeats many writers, and it contains the best work of any kind that Raine has done.

By contrast, Parts I ("Rich") and III ("Poor") for the most part confirm the methods of his earlier poetry. The exceptions are autobiographical pieces, some covering, at a lower intensity, the incidents sketched in the memoir, and some extending the narrative to include Raine's own activities as a father:

Washing hair, I kneel to supervise a second rinse and act the courtier:

tiny seed pearls, tingling into sight, confer a kind of majesty.

And I am author of this toga'd tribute on my aproned lap.

It is a pleasing picture. But "confer a kind of majesty" is at once vague and a little hackneyed; and in this instance, the corresponding passage in Lowell does qualify one's esteem for the later poem: "After thirteen weeks / my child still dabs her cheeks / to start me shaving . . . Dearest, I cannot loiter here." At any rate, the more personal poems stay clear of the carefully extravagant phrases that have been planted at regular intervals elsewhere. These need as a rule to be decoded rather than imagined: a "trout / tortured with asthma", for example, is nothing more than a trout gasping out of the water. Once we have seen that, its interest is exhausted.

There is other evidence here that Raine still associates seriousness with the on-purpose

effects of difficulty. His preface sounds a note of high candour about this, copied from the preface to Lowell's *Imitations*: "As most readers will realize, I have freely adapted to my own purpose work by Dante, Marina Tsvetayeva, Rimbaud, the anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet of 'Wulf and Eadwacer' and Ford Madox Ford. My debt to these authors is very general: they were inspirations, not detailed models." That "work by Dante" is good (as "mobled queen" was good). In fact, the allusions are scarcely audible, and certainly less imposing than this makes them sound. At times, Raine seems to believe that a poem is a moderately fanciful, moderately stimulating, procession of words knocked half a notch out of their prose order. This accounts for the satisfying monotony of his verse—almost all of it free verse of five-to-ten syllables per line. It also helps to explain the nicely calculated quality of the few interruptions that his policy allows: words like "frenum" and "plosive", or "obliterate" and "ejaculate" used as particles; and occasionally, the metaphor that inverts itself by overemphasis—"She felt excitement / like a dying salmon in his lap." Since Raine alludes respectfully to Salvador Dali, it may be added that he shares with Dali a thoughtless fondness for the well-contrived shock.

Apart from the poems about family and memory, *Rich* contains several oblique meditations on history and some expert pornography, both oblique and explicit. "An Attempt at Jealousy" is among the best of this group; it begins in resentment and ends in self-pity; but in the meanwhile the deserted lover wonders why he should be jealous of the man who replaced him:

Tell me, is he bright enough to find that memo-pad you call a mind? Or has he contrived to bring you out— given you an in-tray and an out? How did I ever fall for a paper-clip? How could I ever listen to office gossip even in bed and find it so intelligent? Was it straight biological bent?

And so it goes on, amiably, for nine more stanzas. The poem on the next page is "Gauguin", a Tahitian child's monologue about the things that men and women do with each other in secret, which ends: "*Handmake Kodak man, come back, I my secrets are sorry with oil.*" It is all managed in this sort of pligin English; but these last lines are poetry all the same. The style and incidental details of "An Attempt at Jealousy" and "Gauguin" are arrived at naturally, and together they show Raine's versatility with a single theme. In certain other poems, he sounds like a man trying hard to be drawn to what is repellent, and in his preface he mentions an expression he has tried to admire: "'to wipe someone's face', meaning to kill someone—a deceptive euphemism that deserves wider currency". The expression has not caught on because the idea is not tolerable; and who would want to belong to a tribe that gave it much currency? Raine's worst moments come from deceptive euphemisms of just this kind. But the prose of *Rich* seems to point in an opposite direction, and it is the direction that he ought to pursue.

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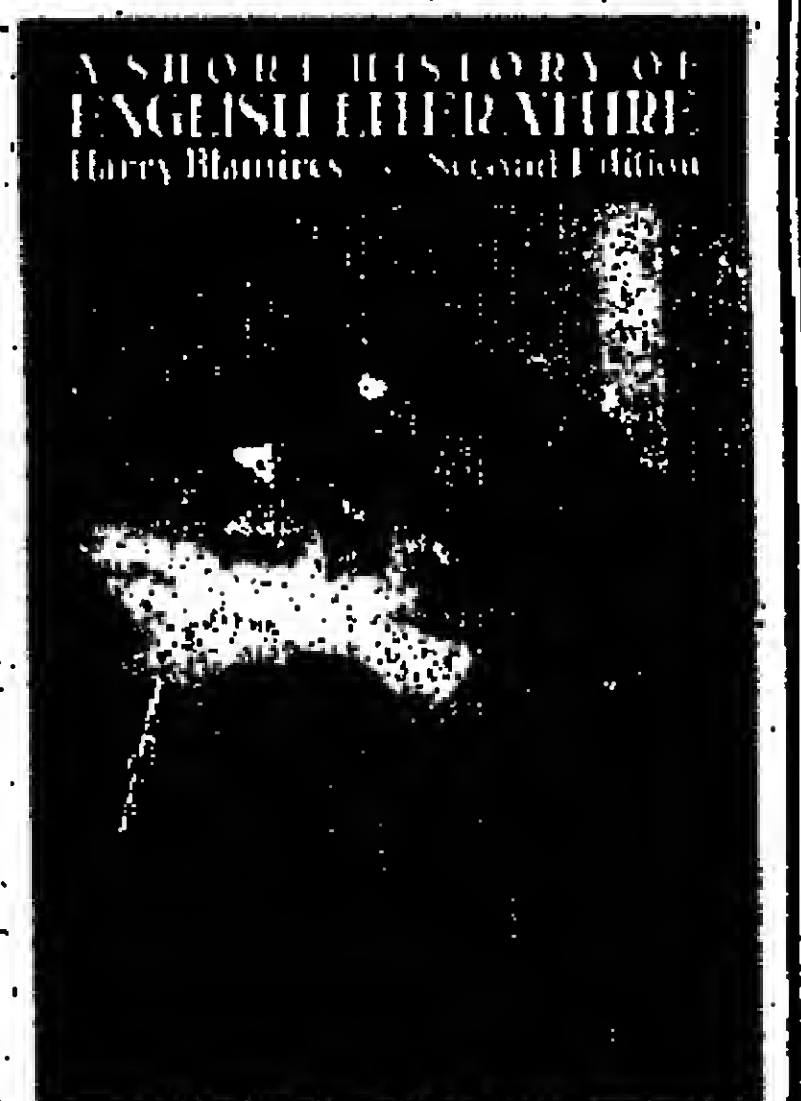
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Peering into the darkness

A.A.M. Duncan

ALFRED P. SMYTH
Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80-1000
279pp. Edward Arnold. Paperback, £6.95.
07311 63054

Warlords and Holy Men, Scotland AD 80-1000 has the chance to make the break from the old search for the national origins of a British kingdom and to place the inhabitants of early Scotland, the proto-Scots, in a different, north Atlantic, north North Sea context, peripheral to European culture and trade. Alfred Smyth has already broken a few lances and a few moulds in early Irish and Viking history; his work on early Leinster is a new kind of history of an early society and his name on this title page arouses lively expectations.

It cannot be said that he has repeated his Leinster success in Scotland; I get no impression of how a living was earned, how or where wealth was created. Scotland and its disparate regions are still a "peripheral wilderness" so far as early settlement history is concerned, and the work of R.A. Dodgson is not, I think, included in the very full bibliography. Brochs, vitrified forts, wheelhouses and souterrains are part of an inadequate archaeological record, the first two the lairs of (presumably) warlords but the latter two the homesteads of farmers, about whom we would like to know a great deal more. I sense that Dr Smyth does not know the soil and rock of Scotland as he knows the bog of Ireland, for his map places the leading Pictish tribe, the Caledonians, along the south-east shore of Loch Ness: has he seen Lochaber?

Smyth sticks to the established topics: Roman influence, the Britons of the north, the Picts, the Vikings and that arch-traditional topic, "the birth of medieval Scotland". But if the topics are traditional, the treatment of them is rarely conventional. Not for this author the balanced summary of other people's views and the judicious assessment of the most probable among them; Smyth has his own path to

hack through the jungle, and if it occasionally and briefly joins that of one of his predecessors, with a warm acknowledgment he hurries on to his point of departure down a new (and, it must be said, often straighter) line. The disappointing exception is the chapter on the Britons of the North, which is a developed version of received wisdom, including the kingdom of Rheged based on Carlisle and the unitary view of the *Gododdin* poems as laments for warriors killed on a raid from Edinburgh to Catterick. Neither of these is as secure a foundation for further speculation as his text assumes. It would have been at least as sound to use the *Gododdin* for the weaponry, tactics and ethos of the war-bands which ranged so widely - as King Aedan rode to attack the Picts and the Angles and sailed against Orkney. At least we know there was a King Aedan; the British name which bids to share his name, Mynyddog, could as well have been a district as the lord of Gododdin.

However, there can be no complaint that Smyth's treatment of the Picts is conventional. Here his robust use of "Dark Age" is fully justified: the Picts are seen darkly and there must be wide scope for hypothesis. In this book Picti is the Latin name for a Celtic warrior aristocracy, a people known to the Irish as Cruithin, who are also found in Ireland and whose name is another Celtic form for Priteni (Britons); hence the Picts are the most northern Britons. But the weak link in this chain is when the Irish called the Picts Cruithin: if always, then Smyth is right; if only after an origin legend of the Cruithin had been borrowed for the Picts about 700, then the argument surely falls. This matter is important to Smyth's attack on Pictish matriliney, which he claims is based firstly upon this legend (which he declares to be unhistorical while accepting its basic truth), secondly upon two cases of identifiable exogamy, and thirdly upon the lack of identification for the fathers of other Pictish kings in the king lists. Ingenuity disposes of the exogamy; and the king list is fitted into a "new" model - traditional Irish over-kingship drawn from several competing tribes, which explains

the several patrilinear kins represented in the list. This last argument is particularly well developed and its probability should have been perceived long ago.

With panache Smyth demolishes matriliney and other props of the theory that a considerable non-Indo-European element survived in Pictish culture; and he makes a very good case for reinstating unfashionable links between the Picts and Irish culture as part of a wider "Dark Age Celtic commonwealth". Sadly in a work on this scale there is no space to enquire how the reassessed king lists relate to the annals. Nor does the author question the supposed locations of the Pictish provinces; and he preserves neutrality between the views of Charles Thomas and myself over Ninian's mission to southern Picts by virtually ignoring Bede's tale. In short Smyth likes to choose his own important issues and not have them dictated by the sources or earlier literature.

Similarly with the Vikings, we are spared the usual tour of Orcaean turf-walled long-houses and by *and bolstathr* names, and we lose the picture of Viking farming life which such evidence yields, and which can be found elsewhere. Smyth dwells upon the Vikings as seafarers and warriors, whose family sagas provide evidence of their marriages with native peoples, their feuds and migrations and their appalling cruelty - for Smyth, the evangelist for the "blood eagle", does not miss this opportunity to chill us yet again with a neat run-through of that carve-up. His knowledge of the sources is so thorough that he confidently sweeps the reader on to his conclusion that a leading role in the colonization of Iceland was played by Hebridean Vikings fleeing the authority of the kings of Dublin and Vestfold, and following a route well known to Hebridean monks of the eighth century. It is certainly a new perspective, but there is too much "clarity" and "certainty" about what is hypothesis - albeit perceptive hypothesis. Smyth invites us to conclude: "Had there been a sizeable Norse population on Orkney, for instance, (before 794) Irish annalists would have taken note of such a remarkable occurrence". This is only one instance of his certain knowledge of the "might" and "would-have-beens" of *Dark Age* history, but when he wrote and reread, it should have given him pause to examine how often he had recourse to methodology of this kind. It is rarely valid.

Smyth's last chapters are another bold and sensible essay, this time at making sense of the thin chronicles of post-Viking Scotland. He rejects too easily the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's emphasis upon West Saxon lordship; the

Chronicle may not tell the same story as native sources, but does not necessarily tell a contradictory one. I find Smyth's integration of Strathclyde and its kingship into the tapestry of alternate lines of kings of Alba a very persuasive improvement upon the laconic not to say limp tale which I passed off as tenth-century Scotland a decade ago.

The best parts of the book are without doubt the treatment of Columcille of Iona and of Adomnan of (he suggests) Durrus, the Holy Men of the title. This is based largely upon Adomnan's *Life of Columba* but draws upon Smyth's close familiarity with the sources for the early Irish church, of which Iona was a part. And it gives us a new, rounded and convincing evaluation of Columcille himself and of the Iona of Adomnan's generation freed from the partial judgments of the inadequately informed Bede. So much work has been done in recent years on Iona, most notably by J. Fisher, that study of the culture of the seventh and eighth centuries is in a state of flux. No small contribution, however, was made by Smyth in his papers on the annals in 1975; again he gives us in this book not his overview of present debates but his synthesis of all the diverse evidence: the *Life*, the annals, the *Cán Adamnan*, the Iona sculptures, and (most striking and most contentious) the manuscript of the Gospels, especially Kells. I concur when the author confidently claims the *Book of Kells* for Iona but of course it remains no less a product of the Irish church for having been written there.

The brief for this book requires Smyth to write of Iona as part of "Scottish intellectual and art history". At the end of a lively and learned *tour-de-force*, I part reluctantly from these proto-Scots; they are a diverse bunch and I am glad that, despite his brief, Smyth chooses to see them as part of a wider Celtic commonwealth stretching from Kerry to Buchan and the Welsh hills. I believe that the future for study of the region at least before 800 lies in this approach, free from today's nationalisms. But I should also like as answer to the question: what fractured the commonwealth and brought these disparate peoples and regions together with the Angles of Northern Bernicia to form one people of the Vikings? At one level the answer must be the Vikings who occupied the Hebrides and Yorkshire. But I wonder if a more important factor was not the Old History of Scotland, the myths invented by a later embattled generation to give a supposed ethnic solidarity to the miscellaneous conquests of Kenneth son of Alpin and his descendants.

Highland fling

Anne Smith

JOHN PREBBLE
John Prebble's Scotland
207pp. Secker and Warburg. £12.95.
043638638

In John Prebble's Scotland, Glasgow and Edinburgh are merely jumping-off stages for tours of the desolate grandeur of the North; the industrial heartland, where the great majority of Scots live, is an irrelevance. Mr Prebble has made a Clearance of his own, for he has cleared away anything that does not feed the romantic melancholy of his temperament. His Scotland, in effect, begins and ends with the Gaelic. The Highland Clearances, "last Diaspora of the Gael", obsess him in much the same way that the Jarrow March obsessed the Labour Party.

Prebble sticks melancholy out of Scots history as a weasel sucks eggs. Take, for example, his description of the Glaswegians: "They have made Glasgow a defiant city, a raw, bold and defiant city. They anaesthetize their despair with astringent and perceptive humour. They spit abusive contempt from broken windows, drink their grief away in night-dark streets, defend their perverse independence in folk-lore songs of obscene iconoclasm, and spray their scornful irreverence across the purple grime of their city's sandstone walls."

In what way is Glasgow a "defiant" city, one long to ask: what or whom does it defy? What despair? A cheaper populace than the Glaswegians have yet to meet, and if they seek to anaesthetize a mysterious despair, they do so

with whisky; every tenth building in the city appears to contain a pub. One could challenge every assumption in the passage above.

Nothing that was built after the Forty-five has much aesthetic appeal for Prebble. Victorian Glasgow, where in a "monumental organism" or "euphoria of architectural abundance" the citizenry "erected great halls in which to place their fine libraries and galleries" (and where else were they to put the books and works of art, one wonders), is an abomination to him. Yet, he says, "it is the people who make Glasgow, not its arrogant, money-proud buildings." But who then made the buildings?

Similarly, Prebble claims that "most people in Edinburgh are affectionately attached to 'the Gothic exorcism of the Scott Monuments'". Not so, in my experience: most people in Edinburgh find it faintly comic, or are alienated and embarrassed by it. Again, it is hard to agree with his assertion that "The stony names of the valleys reflect the nervous spirit of the old Border reivers. Eskdale and Teviotdale... Liddisdale and Teviotdale... Only for the select few, and those mainly tourists, one suspects, do the syllables of these names contain 'trotting music'... 'with grace' notes from bridle-chain and scabbard steel."

This is a book for the amateur historian who is also a sentimentalist about Scotland. For those who have to fight constantly against the Disneyland image of Scottish history - for it does, admittedly, have considerable appeal to the sentimentalist in us all - John Prebble's Scotland is yet another dangerous book.

Dealing with the sultans

Robert Irwin

ELIJAH ASHTOR
Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages
599pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
£55.70.
069103863

Most European travellers to medieval Egypt were overwhelmed by the size and populousness of Cairo, the luxuries available in its markets and the fertility of Egypt's soil. In the eyes of Ptolemy (c 1420) the Delta province of Gharbiya, which produced sugar, linen and cotton, was hardly less than an earthly paradise. He claimed that the Christian powers were pouring a fountain of gold and silver into Egypt to buy the goods it produced or which it transmitted from further East. Anselm of Adorno (1470) believed Cairo to be the greatest and richest of the world's cities and asserted that some of its merchants had accumulated kingly fortunes. Arnold Von Harff (1496) wrote similarly of the fortunes of Cairo's merchants and of Egypt's favourable balance of trade with Christendom. Modern historians have been less impressed with the economic performance of the Mamluke Sultanate. Elijah Ashtor is particularly unimpressed. The last grand synthesis on medieval trade with the Near East, W. Heyd's *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen Age*, appeared almost a hundred years ago. Ashtor's new synthesis draws on subsequent research by Balard on the Genoese, Carrère on the Catalans, Krekic on Dubrovnik, and others; above all it seeks to bring together the results of Ashtor's own intimidatingly extensive researches. His use of sources ignored or scarcely noticed by Heyd, among them the Datini archives, the deliberations of the Venetian senate and Arabic chronicles, allows him to present a fuller, more accurate picture.

But it is also a narrower one, for whereas Heyd covered the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean, including the Balkans, from the reign of the Emperor Justinian to the conquest of Egypt by the Ottomans in 1517, Ashtor's study is devoted to European trade with Egypt and Syria from 1291 to c 1490. The loss of Crusader possessions on the Syrian mainland to the Mamlukes in 1291 and the consequent Papal embargoes on trade with the Muslims inaugurated a new crisis in Christian commerce with the Near East. By the 1490s, on

the other hand, Muslim military triumphs were being overshadowed by commercial and technological advances in Europe, and the Mamlukes' near stranglehold on the spice route from the Indies would shortly be threatened by the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean and their blockade of the Red Sea.

In the intervening two centuries there were many obstacles in the way of trade - among them Christian-Muslim mistrust, sporadic Genoese-Venetian warfare, arbitrary Mamluke exactions, shipwreck, piracy and fluctuations in demand. Yet the trade in spices and textiles grew and, as it grew, Venice's share in it grew too. In the saga of *Levant Trade* the protagonists seem to acquire corporate personalities. The Venetians are patient and inclined to compromise. The Genoese and Catalans are too belligerent and headstrong for their own good. The Egyptians are greedy and erratic. Hard work and sober book-keeping bring the Venetians their Smilesian triumph in the disorganized and rapacious East.

That bagging over sacks of pepper and bales of cotton concluded some five hundred years ago could occasion *parti pris* today may cause incredulity in some quarters, but it is so. Ashtor favours the Venetian side in these hagglings. The corporation of Egyptian spice mer-

chants, the Karimis, combined to keep the prices too high, the pepper was often adulterated, the fifteenth-century sultans instituted an iniquitous system of forced purchases at inflated prices to Western merchants: these and other complaints are taken up by Ashtor. The sultans however replied at the time and, if these old grievances of the Venetian senate are to be aired once more, then the Mamluke case should be restated here. The Venetians brought in debased silver money, the filigree work on expensive imported garments also frequently proved to be debased, they sold short measures of cloth, they colluded with pirates and other enemies of the Mamluke régime, they formed dealers' rings to keep spice prices down, their profit margins were exorbitant and they consistently sought ways to avoid customs duty. The forced-purchase system was the most effective way of ensuring that the Mamluke régime got its fiscal cut from the profitable trade, whatever evasive techniques the Europeans might seek to employ.

Although in the first half of the book Ashtor seems to regard the Karimis as an obstructive nuisance, in the second half he deplores the demise of their corporation and its replacement by agents working for the sultans and emirs. The military feudatories were worse



An illustration from *El Libro del Cavallero Cifar* taken from *Iconography in Medieval Spanish Literature* by John E. Keller and Richard P. Kinkade (1999). University Press of Kentucky. £42.50. 08311 14977.

Calling out the military

Randall Rogers

PHILIPPE CONTAMINE
War in the Middle Ages
Translated by Michael Jones
387pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50.
0631131426

Interest in medieval military history has experienced a revival in recent years, particularly on this side of the Atlantic, although in California "creative anachronisms" still thrive on "re-creating tournaments as they should have been". Academic studies have been numerous if often highly specialized in their subject-matter or chronological scope. Military history remains based on narrative accounts of skirmishes, sieges and battles, but other forms of evidence have become increasingly important.

Archaeology has contributed enormously not only to a knowledge of arms and armour, but also to an understanding of the changing nature and functions of medieval fortifications. Literary texts have been subjected to the most thorough scrutiny, to illustrate attitudes towards warfare, the status of knightly developments in techniques of mounted combat. Financial and administrative records have proved a rich quarry for those interested in how later medieval states organized and tried to pay for their military endeavours. Although scholars have taken a number of different approaches, the common theme has been to discuss warfare in its wider social, economic and even technological contexts.

Philippe Contamine has been in the first rank of historians engaged in this field, having undertaken important studies in the warfare of

the later Middle Ages and the political, social and technical factors which influenced it. Although he has not abandoned these interests, his latest book is more ambitious in its scope and objectives. *War in the Middle Ages* surveys Western European military history from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries - from the Barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire to the French invasions of Renaissance Italy.

Although primarily focused on events in French-speaking areas of Europe, Germany, Italy and England, the book also discusses military activities in Spain and the Near East. As Contamine tells us, his purpose "is to restore to war its decisive place both as an extant factor and as the product of a whole cultural, technical and economic environment". And this is what he does, in a lucidly written work of synthesis and scholarship, of which Michael Jones has provided an admirable translation.

Not the least of Contamine's achievements is his bibliography, in which more than 1,000 entries are coherently organized into topical sections. Old problems are reviewed in the light of recent research into such matters as the manpower resources of the Carolingians, the chronology of the use of the stirrup and ascendancy of the couched lance in mounted combat. Particular attention is given to mercenaries, and to the question of who exactly counts as a mercenary in the medieval period. Contamine demonstrates the military utility of socially inferior bands of marauders, as well as the problems they presented when unemployed. He also addresses the question of the state of the "art of war" in the Middle Ages. He argues that, given the conditions and attitudes

of the period, the criticisms of analysts such as Liddell Hart are undeserved and probably anachronistic.

But this book offers more than a review of scholarship and a discussion of traditional questions of medieval military history: Contamine divides the Middle Ages into four periods: the Barbarians, a feudal age, medieval society at its prime, and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He discusses the characteristic features of warfare in each period and relates them to the particular economic and political structures. Moreover, the author is aware throughout that the patterns of conflict were determined not only by the arms of rulers and states, but also by the impulses of a bellicose nobility.

Contamine characterizes the warfare of the feudal age (900-1150) as a "multitude of skirmishes, sieges, raids, burnings, encounters and battles, often on a very small scale, whose real constituent the daily fare of contemporary annals and chronicles". This he attributes primarily to the political decentralization usually associated with this period of European history. Yet, as he also points out, this same age of internal fragmentation witnessed the extension of Latin Christian authority into southern Italy and Europe and the Near East. Some of these conquests owed much to characteristically "feudal" methods of warfare: Norman campaigns in southern Italy and Sicily were waged with slender manpower resources and consisted primarily of raids, ambushes, blockades and occasionally outright banditry. The battlefield victories of the First Crusaders contributed greatly to the success of their expeditions; yet the capture of the Syro-Palesti-

than the high bourgeoisie. Military juntas in the Third World today are not usually very successful in running their economic affairs, so it is a fair bet that the military in medieval Egypt were not either. But this will need to be proved, and the statistics and indications of economic decay provided in *Levant Trade* are not always convincing. Not a sparrow can fall in medieval Egypt without Ashtor's deducing from it a general decline in the sparrow population, itself in turn an indicator of a more general decay in the land.

For example, a decline in the number of sugar factories in Fustat, the decayed precursor of Cairo proper, is not evidence of a more general decline in the sugar industry. We simply do not know how many factories there were in Egypt as a whole, in the thirteenth or the fifteenth century. Nor can the personal decision of the Sultan Barquq not to wear silk be taken as an indication of the incredible poverty of the régime in the late fourteenth century: it was rather a gesture of pious asceticism. More generally, the sultans' sumptuary legislation was based on moral impulses rather than economic exigencies. Again, Ashtor uncritically quotes Magrizi on the decline of the number of looms in Alexandria from 14,000 in the 1390s to 800 in 1434. Other medieval cities should be so blessed with such a decline in their textile industries! It is questionable whether there were 14,000 looms in the whole of Western Europe in the 1390s. In other words, Magrizi's statistics are worthless.

Even so, the sheer weight of data that Ashtor brings to bear on the general issue has persuasive force, and it does seem possible that military exactions and corrupt fiscal practices prevented investment in profitable technology, thereby preventing their subjects from imitating the technical advances being made in the West. Whether, given the seasonal flow of the Nile, the pattern of the winds and the lack of fuel in the Levant, it would have been easy for them to do so, is another matter. Moreover, Ashtor's picture is not all black. Though he writes of "the decay of agriculture in the Levant", he makes it clear that sugar cultivation expanded in the late thirteenth century. Cotton growing did too and its expansion was sustained throughout the period.

Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages is the impressive product of the author's industry. The material amassed and Ashtor's often ingenious interpretations of it should provide another century's worth of controversy.

nian littoral from 1099-1123 owed much to small-scale campaigns of harassment conducted at first from the interior and later, as they became available, from coastal bases. The capture of large Levantine cities was made possible by the naval, logistical and manpower resources of European fleets.

The relationship between Christianity and warfare is another major theme of this study. Although clearly aware of the tensions between them, Contamine notes that "on the whole they got on well together and existed in a constant state of symbiosis, each profiting from the other's support". One could go further than this, and argue that after about 1050 medieval religiosity was thoroughly imbued with martial values. The Crusading movement is the most obvious manifestation of this, but one should also remember the military orders and warrior saints. The Crusades provided the best opportunities for the mutual cooperation between clerics and combatants, and the former were on occasion of notable importance in the actual conduct of operations. Here one thinks not only of the warrior bishop, Adhemar of Le Puy, and the priests who prayed directly behind the Crusader siege-tower at Mamt in 1098, but also of the "rock-thrower of God" at the siege of Acre in 1191 whose operations were financed by the collections of a priest, and of the confraternity organized by William, Archdeacon of Paris, to supply and operate Simon of Montfort's artillery in the Albigensian Crusade.

War in the Middle Ages offers not only a perceptive interpretation of medieval warfare and history, but also an agenda for further research.

One of the remarkables

Pat Rogers

ROGER NORTH
General Preface and Life of Dr John North
Edited by Peter Millard
214pp. University of Toronto Press. £23.
08020 24203

Biography is an invasion of the personal space of another, and once even the dead were allowed a cordon of privacy upon which writers did not care to infringe. English biography in the seventeenth century preserved this decorum by concentrating on the collective (Fuller, Wood, Aubrey) or the records of familiar friendship (Walton, Aubrey again). Roger North took this a stage further: he wrote lives of three of his brothers, plus an autobiographical sketch. Indeed, North occupies an adjacent position to Aubrey in what Michael Hunter has called "the realm of learning" in Restoration England. It is true that Roger survived in darkest Norfolk until 1734, strumming happily on his "divine Organ", built by Father Smith: he describes with some regret his brother John's unsuccessful efforts on the same instrument. But, well before 1700, he was one of yesterday's men: an unreconstructed Tory, a theological stickler, and an anti-Newtonian.

Like Aubrey, however, he has been saved

for posterity by a "roving and magotie-headed" nature which turns antiquarian jottings into scraps of poetry. His granddaughter remarked that Roger "loved and understood architecture. . . [and] another of his failings, if I may term it so, was an inordinate passion for music". We now have in print his writings on both subjects, both attractive and well-informed collections. Some general essays are published in F.J.M. Korsten's study (1981), though here the subject is flattened between several hundred notes to each chapter. In the present volume Peter Millard has reprinted Roger's general preface to his lives, for the first time in full; and also the shortest and best ordered of the biographies, from a more reliable manuscript version than previous printings.

The general preface is chiefly notable for its emphatic assertion, announced at the very opening, that "The history of private lives adapted to the perusal of common men is more beneficial (generally) than the most solemn registers of ages and nations, or the acts and monuments of famed governors, statesmen, prelates, or generals of armies." There is an equally sounding, Brownian blast from the organ at the close: "And if there be any persons of such upstart principles that with them antiquity of families is rather matter of ridicule than of honour, let them enjoy their epicurean

prospect, and see their posterity run riot into destruction, before the earth covers the corruptible ingredients of their composition." In between, North has justified his own choice of subject-matter: "Therefore a life-writer in education, friendship, conversation, and all commerce of life ought to be the nearest allied to his subject, and not a contingent gatherer or compiler only." It is an eloquent, opinionated and often forward-looking document: "There is no subdivision of humankind, be it so low as soldiers, pedlars, gypsies, and tinkers, but their actions and behaviour, well related, would be a capital learning to men of the same condition and not amiss to those of a better. . ."

The life of John North will be more immediately attractive to most readers. It describes a curious individual, Isaac Barrow's protégé and successor as Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. John emerges as faintly repellent but also pitiable: an austere, self-punishing creature, given to hypochondria and writer's block, thin-skinned and obsessive. His neurotic compulsions would be irresistible to any modern psychobiographer; luckily Roger need do little more than record his guilts, his visitations by "nocturnals" (incubi), his fear of going blind, "his continual art and practice to amend himself". It makes one grateful that Roger had not heard of oppressive father fi-

gures (like Barrow), or identity-crushing sittings (like Newton). There is a moving account of John's severe stroke and subsequent decline, with an intensely funny - though horrifying - story of his doctors' attempts to keep him from sinking into catalepsy by making a du with a "consort of tongs, firegrate, waistcoat, and dancing of . . . curtains-rings". His elderly mother, sensible woman, would have none of this, and allowed him some badly needed rest.

Roger writes with some verve: a school-master addicted to the bottle is termed "a wet epicure". He possesses, as Millard observes, "the sense of fact", and one might add that the notes are helpful on both historical and linguistic matters - North is not an unduly allusive writer, for his time, but naturally a good deal requires explanation. One small point: the editor writes that it is not clear why North refers to Paolo Sarpi as "P. Paolo", unless by confusion with a pseudonym. It may be much simpler - a loose employment of "Padre" for an Italian friar. Roger was no Sarpi, but in his English way he knew what had to be done: "It may be observed by those that know much of times . . . that many, and perhaps the most important, passages are not to be found in the histories. As in topography, some, but not half, of the remarkables of a country are to be found."

Now rely on grammars, dictionaries, concordances and cribs, his only way to Sanskrit literature was through Persian translations; it is a mark of his amateurism that he continued studying these even while the opening of Sanskrit to the West was making them obsolete.

Soon after he went to India, Halhed's life became bound up with that of Hastings, to whom he was successively protégé, political defender, confidential friend and tutor in poetry. His life is also part of the emergence of India into British consciousness. The knowledge contained in the *Code and Grammar*, and the observations and speculations in their prefaces, supplied a growing demand, and his pamphlets in defence of Hastings, in Rosane Rocher's words, "fuelled the opinion of British politicians and the public at large that they were indeed well-informed on East Indian affairs". The British have treated India as their mental property ever since.

What brought Halhed most publicity, however, was his conversion in 1795 to the cause of the prophet Richard Brothers. It is to this that we owe the British Museum's acquisition of his collection of oriental manuscripts: he sold the bulk of them when he calculated that the time was near for him to follow Brothers in triumph to Jerusalem, and the rest when he was discredited by the failure of the prophecy (there was a notable thunderstorm and a decent-sized earthquake, but not enough to inaugurate the millennium). After briefly

supporting Brothers's rival, Joanna Southcott, Halhed lived as a recluse for twelve years when he emerged and resumed his friendship with Hastings and others, they seem to have behaved as if the prophecy business had never happened.

Dr Rocher's book, the first full biography of Halhed, is thoroughly professional. Besides the letters and poems of Halhed which includes, many of them hitherto unpublished, she makes an important contribution to the study of Hastings and his times, both in India and in England, and also to our knowledge of Sheridan's earliest work, and of eighteenth-century millenarianism, which she discusses in its sociological and psychological as well as its historical aspects. The results of her research are closely packed, leaving little room for any concessions to readers unfamiliar with the workings of the East India Company or the ins and outs of Whig and Tory; but the book is important for any student of eighteenth-century politics, philology, literature or popular religious movements.

Halhed made history as the author of the first book to use Bengali script printed with metal type; the printer was Wilkins, the future pioneer Sanskritist. Today, photocopying makes it possible for the publishers of this book to set English, Greek and romanized Sanskrit with a clarity and ease which Halhed and Wilkins would have envied. But the diacritics have been added with far too thick a pen.

The inquiring sort

John Carswell

SARAH MARKHAM
John Loveday of Caversham 1711-1789: The life and hours of an eighteenth-century onlooker
622pp. Salisbury: Michael Russell. £17.95.
085955 0958

John Loveday's life occupies, almost to a nicety, what we think of as the eighteenth century - that is to say he was born just three years before the accession of King George I, and died in the year of the French Revolution. He was a member of the leisured middle class - "the middling sort" who, as Dorothy Marshall and other historians have pointed out, were every bit as important a class in the society of that time as the more showy aristocrats and adventurers who catch attention. His forebears had been London goldsmiths; and he seems never to have done a stroke of paid work in his life.

He was by tradition and inclination a Tory, but not a Jacobite; perhaps because he did not

like the Scots, in whom (as he said) "no fault is to be found but their consummate nastiness". Although he was drawn in as an organizer for the "Old" or Tory interest in the Oxfordshire election of 1754 ("in which [said Name] no expense or chicanery was spared on either side"), he was far from being a politician or even a local public man. Nor did he leave any substantial printed work behind him. The importance of his quiet, rather prim life, here recorded in loving and abundant detail, lies in the fact that he was a passionate inquirer into and recorder of the contemporary scene, especially, but by no means exclusively, its works of art and architecture.

Loveday was an Oxford man, and his picture of that university, where he spent seven years as a student and made many life-long friends, does much to redress Gibbon's mordant description. Loveday and Gibbon, indeed, came from the same stratum of society and went to the same college (Magdalen), and the fact that Loveday got so much more out of his university experience was not due entirely to the absence of any atom of irony from his character. Even before he went up he had resolved to study

under one of the few great scholars Oxford then possessed, Thomas Hearne.

Hearne, like many scholars, was a good hater, and this has come to colour our usual impression of him; but for Loveday he was a revered master, and the correspondence here printed demonstrates not only Hearne's passion for scholarship but the rigour of his standards. Even today it is something of a stain on the university that such a man should actually have been permanently excluded from using the Bodleian by a petty feud on the part of the Librarian. His death, with its typically stoical last letter, when Loveday was only twenty-six, takes much of the muscle out of the rest of the story.

From his Oxford days onwards Loveday became a tireless, systematic traveller and describer of the social and artistic scene. In this, of course, he was far from unique, and he is not the equal in his century, for instance, of Torrington, purely as a traveller. But he was accurate and orderly, extremely well-read, and had a very good artistic memory. In the course of his journey he recorded the contents and state of some 200 major buildings, mainly in Eng-

land and Wales, and the catalogue of the pictures he noted in them, which has been patiently extracted from his records and printed as an appendix to this volume with the aid of a grant from the British Academy, will be valuable to the art world in tracing provenances.

Sarah Markham was confronted by colossal materials, both in the shape of Loveday's own papers (now scattered into four repositories, but indiscriminately here referred to as L.P.), which is not very helpful) and many others which she has industriously sought out. This abundance is well organized but genealogical information and minor anecdote tend sometimes to overwhelm the reader ("Bagshaw is best known for having performed the burial service for Dr Johnson's wife Kitty"). An odd omission, therefore, is the absence of any specific date for Loveday's death in the year 1789. But all in all this inquiring life, spent on the road or among his very ordinary friends and relations, deserved an adequate chronicle. It has found one in his descendant, John Markham. Her book shows an important side of eighteenth-century life that is often forgotten.

Biology knows best

Andrew Woodfield

FLORIAN VON SCHILCHER and NEIL TENNANT
Philosophy, Evolution and Human Nature
283pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £15.95.
07100 97670

Florian von Schilcher, a behaviour geneticist, met Neil Tennant, a philosopher of logic, at the University of Edinburgh. Their intellectual collaboration on the present book lasted several years and entailed visits to idyllic, sometimes slightly heady, locations. The four chapters comprise an exhaustive résumé of evolutionary biology and its controversies; a summary of ideas about cultural evolution, sociobiology and ethics; a naturalistic look at the scope and limits of human knowledge, plus a technical philosophical discussion on the evolution of languages. The result is an over-ambitious synthesis written in relentlessly abstract English.

According to Richard Lewontin, evolution is bound to occur when three empirical conditions are met: that individuals vary; that there is a genetic basis for the variation; and that some variants produce more offspring than others. The authors identify five supplementary conditions, also empirical, but all satisfied in our world. Given which, the conditional statement that if the three major conditions are met, then evolution occurs, is a logical truth. This is a far cry from the ill-formed old view that "survival of the fittest" is a tautology, and has none of its trivializing implications. Having clarified the structure of the synthetic theory of evolution at the start of Chapter One, the authors end the chapter by assessing its scientific status. Naïve falsificationists and creationists receive short shrift.

Sandwiched between the two methodological sections are 77 pages of up-to-date opinion on such topics as: the unit of selection, heredity and environment, gradualism and punctuated evolution, and phylogeny, neutralism versus pan-selectionism, and many more. Von Schilcher and Tennant distinguish, following Lehman, between the heritability of a trait construed as the extent to which genes are responsible for producing it in the individual, and heritability in the quantitative geneticist's sense. The latter measures the degree to which heredity contributes to differences between individuals with respect to a trait. The authors report that most quantitative studies reveal considerable heritability or genetic variation in

cognitive and personality traits. The ground is thus prepared for an enthusiastic embracing of sociobiology in Chapter Two, of which more in a moment.

The third and fourth chapters contain some heavy-duty theorizing which will be pretty hard going for both scientific and lay readers. There are clever and original ideas here, though they are highly compressed. I single out two themes.

Evolutionary epistemology is Kantian in its emphasis upon the constructive role of the mind, but it sees the mind as biological rather than transcendental. It claims that "our cognitive capacities, being grounded in neurological structures that are themselves based on the action of genes, have been phylogenetically shaped in such a way that Kantian *a priori*s are ancestral *a posteriori*s." How much of Kant do we need to alter, then, in order to bring his psychology up to date? It is suggested here that one doctrine which might well be dropped is his distinction between forms of intuition and categories of the understanding. The grounds are that there is no hard boundary between synthesizing sensory information into intuitions, and uniting intuitions by concepts to yield perceptual judgments. In fact, this is a highly controversial claim in the philosophy of psychology, and we need more sustained argument than we get here concerning the notions of *concept*, *percept* and *content*.

The second theme is central to Chapter Four, which speculates about how languages might have arisen. In the influential view of H. P. Grice, linguistic communication demands higher-order intentions and beliefs on the part of speakers and hearers. Many theorists have challenged this, pointing out that communication is essentially a form of conveying information, and that some behaviour emitted without complex intentions conveys information in at least a *proto*-linguistic way. Maybe so, say the authors, but in the absence of such intentions language could not have got far. Intentions are needed to sustain the employment of syntactic rules which have an infinite generative capacity, and all existing languages have such rules. The authors mount their case with the help of Herbert Simon's "watchmaker" principle: if you are building a complex entity (like a watch, or a sentence), it is more efficient to build sub-assemblies first and then join them together, rather than trying to do it all in one go. Presumably, the evolution of language went through stages, each stage being marked by the production of

slightly more complex arrangements of words than the previous stage. People had to be clever enough to combine their previous knowledge of what the components meant with contextual and other knowledge in order to work out the likely new messages. Conventions would no doubt emerge among them, governing the new ways of stringing words together, and this "involves their being past the Gricean hump". I, for one, am very willing to be convinced by this, but the explanation is complex, and I wish the authors could have taken us through it more slowly.

Let me now return to Chapter Two, dealing with cultural evolution, sociobiology and ethics. The authors' central tendency here is to overestimate the role of genes, and to underestimate the responsibility of the mind, in explaining human social arrangements. Suppose that two putative, partial explanations are offered for a social practice, with explanation (A) citing the participants' own reasons for it, and explanation (B) saying that the practice exists because genes underwriting it have been naturally selected. The two explanations could both be true. In our authors' terms, (A) gives a "proximate" and (B) an "ultimate" causal analysis. How much explanatory importance should be accorded to each? Obviously, the relative weight we give them will vary depending on the case, and in the majority of cases it will be an exaggeration to claim that there are specific genes for the behaviour in question. Genes are not favoured for their propensity to make their carriers do what is done in Rome. But they may be selected because they build people endowed with the flexibility and the learning capacity to do, when in Rome, as the Romans do. So although it may be true that genes figure faintly in the causal story lying behind the social custom, an explanation of type (B) is likely to be exceedingly weak. In most dialectical situations where (A) and (B) compete for favour and rational acceptance, we will rightly say that (A) is far weightier because it cites a more important cause.

Philosophy, Evolution and Human Nature is a sophisticated text. Several passages take a sensible, moderate line. But Chapter Two contains too many places where the authors regress to a default position, a hard-nosed biologism which underplays the role of thought and will. Their commonest fallacy is to infer to the non-behaviour explanation. They claim, for example, that I will save the lives of my two brothers if I can, because "doing so ensures maximal representation of my gene complement". This is a far weightier because it cites a more important cause.

Consequential coincidences

D. H. Mellor

D.M. ARMSTRONG
What is a Law of Nature?
180pp. Cambridge University Press. £17.50.
0521 253438

Philosophy's two basic questions are "What do you mean?" and "How do you know?" To ask them of science is to do its metaphysics and methodology; to ask what knowledge science gives us, and how. Clearly the knowledge science gives must be attainable by its methods; whichever we ask first, the answer to both questions must fit each other. But for much of this century questions of method have come both first and last. Logical positivism made metaphysics a dirty word, and many philosophers of science still suppose it to be exhausted by logic and semantics. Metaphysics has been largely left to those whose ideas of science stop with Aristotle or Descartes.

But things are looking up. More philosophers now do the metaphysics of modern science properly, with an eye, but without undue deference, to its method, logic and semantics. This book by D. M. Armstrong is a good example of a topic central to the subject. Law statements are science's primary products, and the bulk of all science-based technology. To say what science is, we must say what laws are. A recent orthodoxy about laws makes them more regularities. The law that all Fs are Gs (eg all electrons have the same charge) is just the statement of those properties always coinciding. But not all regularities are laws: gold

pieces may always be smaller than a cubic mile, but that is not a law. Laws, on what Armstrong accounts the best regularity theory, are the coincidences that are "consequences of those propositions which we should take as axioms if we knew everything and organised it as simply as possible in a deductive system" (F. P. Ramsey, *Foundations*, p. 138).

Against this "systematic" regularity theory Armstrong pits his own account of laws as contingent relations between universals, ie between properties and relations of things. (He argues elsewhere - *Universals and Scientific Realism*, 1978 - that universals exist, provided they are actually instantiated: eg provided something is red, red exists.) That all Fs are Gs is a law, he says, *if being F necessitates being G* (N(F,G)).

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I accept Armstrong's universals, but still think laws are regularities. Lacking space to answer all his arguments, I will sketch answers to three. First, statistical laws. They can be regularities given objective chances, so that (eg) all atoms of a radio-element have the same objective chance of decaying in any given time. Armstrong jibs at my invoking chances just to defend a regularity theory; but I don't do that. We need chances anyway, eg to make sense of action for uncertain gain (stopping smoking, say, to avoid cancer). Chances are as available as universals, and they make more sense of statistical laws. For instance, they let all radioactive atoms instantiate the law of their decay, which for Armstrong only those that decay do.

Secondly, laws clearly do, though most other regularities do not entail counterfactual con-

ditionals: eg that if a non-F thing, *a*, were F, it would be G. Regularity theorists cannot easily say why. But nor can Armstrong. Since N(F,G) is contingent, it might fail if *a* were F, and so fail to make *a* G. To say that supposing *a* F "must not . . . call the laws into question . . . [because] they say what must happen" begs the question. It wouldn't if N(F,G) were really (ie necessarily) necessary; but N(F,G) is only "physically necessary", which for Armstrong just means that it's *something* more than a regularity. "Necessity" here is a mere name for Armstrong's thesis, not an argument for it.

Thirdly, some laws prevent others having instances, which for Armstrong prevents them being laws. But some laws prevent themselves having instances, like those that make H₂O decompose at high temperatures. Consider the equilibrium constant K at such a temperature T of the reaction 2H₂+O₂=2H₂O. K approximates $p_{H_2}/p_{H_2O}^2 \cdot p_{O_2}$, where p_{H_2} , p_{H_2O} and p_{O_2} are pressures of H₂O, H₂ and O₂ in equilibrium at T (cf K. G. Denbigh, *The Principles of Chemical Equilibrium*, 1955, pp 139-40). What prevents H₂O existing at T is K's being so low that even one H₂O molecule would raise its local pressure above equilibrium. K only lacks instances because it is a law. But Armstrong must deny therefore that K is a law, and thus that H₂O's non-existence at T is explained by it, which it clearly is.

This, incidentally, isn't Armstrong's only bad reason for denying laws. He repeats the canard that water's being H₂O and temperature's being mean kinetic energy are identities, which they aren't: one molecule of H₂O has almost none of water's physical properties - and accelerating it doesn't automatically heat it up! The real reason these supposed identities are not laws is that they aren't even facts: some water is D₂O, and radiation will give even a vacuum a temperature.

But these disagreements are no disparagement of Armstrong's splendid and stimulating if (as usual with CUP) overpriced book. If disputable, it is also comprehensive, clear, concise, fair to opponents and full of good, original arguments. All future work on laws starts here.

One of the first three publications in the new Paladin Movements and Ideas series launched last week, with Justin Wintle as editor, is Antony Flew's *Darwinian Evolution* (149pp. Granada. Paperback, £2.50. 0 586 08442 8). In a first chapter on Darwin's life and work, with a summary of his theory in *The Origin of Species*, Professor Flew goes on to show how early difficulties and objections raised have largely been overcome in research and development of the modern synthetic theory. The two central chapters discuss the deductive core of Darwinism, with its philosophical presuppositions and implications, relating his work to that of predecessors in social science such as Malthus and in the Scottish Enlightenment, and the claim that Marx did for sociology what Darwin did for biology. The ideas and possible scope of sociobiology as a projected future science are examined. The final chapter aims to set major contemporary issues in the perspective of Darwin's theory, without accepting it as a guarantee of progress or a foundation for an evolutionary ethics.

Model lives: biography for children

Eric Korn

There was no doubt in the mind of William Bingley, prolific pre-Victorian biographer (he even wrote three volumes of *Animal Biography*), about what he was about: the Eminent Travellers and Eminent Voyagers were chosen for the geographical information their lives conveyed; the British Characters chosen were "the most eminent and instructive"; even the animals were selected for their sagacity and usefulness to mankind. Not much has changed. Lytton Strachey (or Suetonius if it comes to that) seems to have lived in vain. Biography for children still means Lives of Great Men, and without even the occasional exemplary life of a Great Highwayman or a Great Sinner. It is staunchly set in the mode of encouragement of emulation—what some people like to call "setting up rôle models".

In Hamish Hamilton's "Profiles" Series, Cardinal Hume is just one Eminence among many. They are all deeply serious people (albeit with a terrific sense of fun) whose struggles have been rewarded with fame; or else people born to high office, dutiful but none the less humble. Strangely enough, the result of reading a selection of them was to make the human race seem rather unattractive: I pined for a life of Guy or Washoe or even Sefton. Better still would have been a biography of some person who has done tremendously well through no merit of their own and yet remains an absolute bastard, surely the most frequent state of affairs.

Hamish Hamilton's latest list of thirty profiled persons contains nine sportsmen (Muhammad Ali, Geoff Boycott, Lucinda Prior-Palmer), three Queens (four if you count regnant Prime Ministers) plus two other Royals, two ballet dancers, five Latter-Day Saints (Gandhi, Helen Keller, Anne Frank, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King); two Roman Catholic divines, two inventors, one writer, Charlie Chaplin, Winston Churchill, and one former Beatle. It is a list which prompts much speculation, endless games. Why Paul

McCartney instead of John Lennon? Because he is more wholesome? This could hardly have motivated the choice of John Paul II rather than John XXIII. More contemporary relevance perhaps, ie, alive and not dead? Then why is Nureyev partnered by Pavlova rather than Fonteyn (or Torvil and/or Dean, if it comes to that)? There are no contemporary world leaders, other than Margaret Thatcher, who probably gets in under some other rubric, no generals (although aggressiveness is clearly acceptable in sportsmen), no painters, poets, architects, actors. Science is represented by the safe, dull choices of Alexander Fleming and Thomas Edison (the least contemporary figure in the list, after Queen Victoria). Literature is represented by Roald Dahl.

A sort of conglomerate life emerges. The subject was born in humble/difficult/opulent circumstances (or if not a subject, was born in a small palace). She was not an outstanding scholar but was always dreaming of triumphs with the pole vault/Polish question/polarizing microscope. Years of struggle/training/earnest prayer. About that time some people didn't get enough to eat/some Germans didn't get on very well with the Jews/some people thought English cricket needed to improve. But our hero overcame the disappointment and returned to prayer/training/struggle. But all was not always seriousness: at Sandringham/the Vatican/Everton. There was always a time for friendly game with the children/nuns/corgis. She was mourned by thousands, is looking forward to the 1988 Olympics/wonders what the future may hold. Only the smallest of wars is permitted to mar the profile: Gandhi had "no sense of rhythm at all"; Daley Thompson sometimes "lacks concentration"; King "perhaps too much of an actor"; even Prince Philip is "just an ordinary man" (contrary to the belief of the cargo cultists of Vanuatu); while Cardinal Hume wears, "if he will forgive my saying so", a rather crumpled-looking suit.

The biography of Hume is the most uncanny; that of Daley Thompson the most fact-laden, though obsolescent; Nigel Richardson's profile of Martin Luther King is outstandingly



Panda and the lion set off on their travels in Panda and the Bunyips (32pp. Hamish Hamilton, £3.50, 0 241 11344 X). One of several new picture books by Michael Foreman to be published this autumn, this kind Panda adventure has an Australian setting: dark blue skies, hot red deserts and strange birds and beasts.

the best of the bunch, conveying a real sense of political passion, in contrast with the disappointing Gandhi which conveys only a muddled aura of groundnut butter, boiled spinach and the most vapid spirituality. Alan Hamilton's *Prince Philip* takes the Battenburg biscuit for aliphoddy.

Ever since Greece had won its independence from the Turkish Empire, the Turks and Greeks had never liked each other very much. Even today they are not the best of friends, and still argue over who owns the island of Cyprus. On this occasion the argument was over Anatolia, a stretch of wild mountainous land between the two countries.

Richard Woolton's account of John Lennon is notably honest, aimed at an adolescent reader who actually is curious about this culture hero. Dope doesn't raise its alluring head till page 68 (LSD is "regarded today as a pretty unpleasant and dangerous drug, but in the mid-sixties it was new and fashionable"), the "seamy side of

life on the road" is mentioned only in passing, and Brian Epstein's suicide is blamed on pop-pills and financial anxiety. But it has a seriousness which Hamish Hamilton's more solemn series does not achieve. In place of sunny half-tones there are well selected and telling photographs.

Richard Woolton: *John Lennon: An illustrated biography*. 128pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £3.50. Paperback, £3.95. 0 340 33431 2.
Cliff Temple: *Daley Thompson*. 62pp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.50. 0 241 10932 9.
Nigel Richardson: *Martin Luther King*. 63pp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.50. 0 241 10931 0.
Kathryn Splink: *Gandhi*. 63pp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.75. 0 241 11166 8.
Alan Hamilton: *Prince Philip*. 62pp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.75. 0 241 11167 6.
Gerard Noel: *Cardinal Basil Hume*. 60pp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95. 0 241 11204 4.

The story of Joseph

Clive Sinclair

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER
Joseph and Kozza
Illustrated by Donna Diamond
48pp. Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 11050 5

"There are five hundred reasons why I began to write for children", Isaac Bashevis Singer told the assembled guests at the 1978 Nobel Prize banquet, "but to save time I will mention only ten of them." The first went like this, "Children read books, not reviews. They don't give a hoot about the critics." In accordance with Mr Singer's wishes I hereby advise any children precocious enough to be perusing this weekly to throw it away and pick up the book instead — though if they hang on a minute or two longer I'll give them an idea of the plot.

There is a king named Wilk who wears a crown topped off with candles, and whose most beloved daughter is about to be dropped into the river to appease its deity. Just then Joseph, a Jew, enters Wilk's kingdom. He determines to save the doomed maiden (with whom, subsequently, he falls in love) despite the best efforts of the court's dreadful priestesses.

Those adults who have remained behind may by now be recalling biblical precedents; how our hero's namesake won over Pharaoh, how Moses defeated his successor's magicians, how Joseph and Kozza were rescued from the banks of the Nile. There were banks and banks of unnecessary buttons, levers and dials.

These books leave one with the feeling of an author marking time, or perhaps bored with treading the same ground. Diana Wynne Jones is so lucid and perceptive about children's relationships both with each other and with adults that it would be exciting to see her do away for once with the paraphernalia of magic and concentrate on the people. After the indisciplined, supernatural binges of *Archer's Goon*, a clean chasteing draught of the mundane may be just what her imagination needs.

teller, but I doubt he'd thank any critic who didn't take him seriously as an artist. Hence the following.

There are, in fact, connections to be found between *Joseph and Kozza* and Singer's adult fiction. The most obvious being in *The Slave*, of which the present book is but a very simplified reworking (shorn, since it is a fairytale, of any latter-day historical resonances); however, the most interesting concern Singer's recently published novel, *The Penitent*. (At this point it is worth entering a brief bibliographical note: *Joseph and Kozza* was originally published with different illustrations in 1970, while *The Penitent* first appeared as a Yiddish book in 1974.) In that outrageously unambiguous book a sophisticated Jew, Joseph Shapiro, denounces the modern world in its entirety and takes a wife from among the modest daughters of Mea Shearim, thereby reversing the plot of *Joseph and Kozza*. In the former, a Jew returns to the simple ways of his pious ancestors, whereas in the latter a Jew snatches a wife from the primitive ways of her people.

In both cases there are good and bad worlds, and both Josephs keep evil at bay by following to the letter the commandments. This every letter of God's commandments. The simple opposition works beautifully in the book for children, but is far less satisfying in the adult novel. Children, as Singer has observed, are optimists. Adults are not so blessed; we have learnt that evil can sometimes appear in attractive disguises and is not always defeated. Worse, we are not even sure which side we are on.

There is no danger of any such confusion in Doña Diamond's photographically detailed illustrations. But in spite of their realism they look flat and lack sensuality. Her people (unlike Singer's) seem to dwell in a half-realized limbo-land between imagination and reality. To see how illustrations can appear both fantastic and real look no further than Maurice Sendak's marvellous drawings for *Zilver's Court* which perfectly reflect Singer's own that both worlds are equally tangible.

Questioning the witness

Kenneth Leech

DIGBY ANDERSON (Editor)
The Kindness that Kills: The Churches' simplistic response to complex social issues
170pp. SPCK. Paperback, £3.95.
0 281 04096 6

The "new Christian Right" has been on the offensive for some years in the United States, where, apart from its fundamentalist manifestations in such movements as Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and Robert Grant's Christian Voice, it presents a more sophisticated and academically respectable face in the writings of Michael Novak, Ernest Lefever and Richard Neuhaus. It is not surprising that some kind of parallel movement seeking to offer a theological defence of democratic capitalism should manifest itself in Britain, but the intellectual level of the debate is far less advanced. *The Kindness that Kills*, a slim volume of essays apparently produced in a hurry to coincide with Bishop David Sheppard's Dibley Lecture last spring, is a poor attempt to respond to the alleged leftward shift of the Church.

Essentially the book makes three claims. First, that reports from church sources are poorly researched and argued. The introduction calls them "sloppy, ill-thought out, ignorant, one-sided, addicted to secular fashions, uncritical of conventional 'progressive' wisdom, hysterical, unmethodical in the use of sources and evidence, theologically desecated, and, most deplorable, uncharitable to those who disagree". Elsewhere in the book, reports from church bodies are described as "ignorant and unfair" and as presenting a "simplistic picture". Robert Miller, a financial consultant, argues that on issues like unemployment "the Churches can have no special authority or expertise, and their spokesmen write and speak as amateurs"; not only this, they suffer from "a limited theoretical diet".

Second, there are claims that the Churches are particularly lacking in expertise in economics and sociology, and, as an attempt to provide them with a more balanced diet, Rachel Steere produces a list of books, drawn mainly from right-wing sources. Third, it is held that the Churches have neglected theology, that many of their reports "contain little theology" but rather offer a "reconditioned 'Social Gospel'". According to John Greenwood, the Church is "exclusively concerned with social matters", while William Oddie claims that it is "less and

less committed to its historic faith".

In the light of these claims, one might expect a well-researched, closely argued book, firmly rooted in Christian theology and showing a degree of expertise and factual accuracy that contrasted with the ignorance of the "church authors". In fact, none of these expectations is fulfilled. The book is shallow in documented evidence and badly put together. The chapters are short, polemical and repetitive, and make generalized assertions without validation for their truth. Slogans and innuendoes (particularly noticeable in the chapter headings) are substituted for serious discussion, and claims are made which are unjustified and at times untrue. Thus Peter Bauer, in an attack on the encyclicals of Paul VI, accuses that Pope of repeating secular myths to obtain easy popularity, and of "legitimizing envy" by his call for a more just distribution of wealth. He particularly attacks the Pope for claiming that governments always act for the common good, though a glance at the context in *Oceguina Adversus*, section 46, makes it perfectly clear that it is the objectives of good government of which the Pope is speaking. Bauer's claim that his work is not the result of "hard thinking" is pure silliness. Paul VI was one of the most hard-thinking pontiffs of this century; his conclusions happened to differ from those of Lord Bauer — a relationship he shared with many distinguished economists.

P. A. J. Waddington attempts to deal with an Anglican discussion paper on race and crime statistics by Susan Smith (failing to mention that Dr Smith is a social geographer who has specialized in issues of racial segregation and criminal data, since to admit this would undermine one of the central theses of the whole book, that "church authors" are amateurs). Dr Waddington accuses Susan Smith of claiming that the Metropolitan Police's figures on race and crime "had been released for racist motives" and of implying that "the police are generally racist". In the latter case he gives a reference to page 8 of Dr Smith's report, but neither on page 8 nor anywhere else does she make such claims. In a later essay, Bruce Keat is accused, on the basis of a comment on the radio, of seeing no connection between contemplative prayer and social problems; there is no basis in the statement (which is quoted) for such a view. The standard of polemic is strikingly shown in the use of the term "Marxist". The term, as an accusation rather than a description, seems

to be required to be employed in right-wing propaganda, and its use here is of such a kind. There are fifteen occasions in which the terms "Marxist", "pseudo-Marxist", "neo-Marxist" and even "sub-Marxist" are used, and in none are they justified or explained; nor is there any reference to Marx or any Marxist philosopher.

Throughout the book it is assumed that "church authors" have ignored the thinking of economists and sociologists. But nowadays almost all Church boards and committees contain representatives of these disciplines — among them Charles Elliott, referred to in the book, now director of Christian Aid; and Caroline Cox, a contributor to this book, was until recently a member of one of the Church committees. The argument is not therefore between economists and sociologists on the one hand, and "the Church" on the other: it is between one set of interpretations and another.

Theologically, the book is almost barren. There are six references to Christian theology throughout the book. (Even Edward Norman, in his Rethel Lectures of 1978, managed eight.) Three are passing recognitions of original sin and fallenness, two are inaccurate or confused statements about early heresies, while one longer section, in the essay by Brian Griffiths, attempts to outline a theological agenda. Professor Griffiths's chapter, on Christianity and capitalism, is the best in the book. He does not use the term "Marxist" at all, does not seek to discredit his opponents and admits the force of the critique of "possessive individualism" which he sees as "profoundly anti-Christian". But the theological ideas — about the alleged "inwardness" of the Kingdom of God, its relationship to political structures, the nature of the Fall, the relationship of Church and world, and of law and gospel — are not developed.

The appearance of a book such as this at a time when the sufferings of the poor in Britain are greater than they have been since the 1930s, and when some bishops have begun to speak on their behalf in the name of Christ, raises the question: Why has the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge chosen to publish such a book as this? Are there not important ethical issues, issues which derive from the demands of the Gospel, which should be struggled for? Do not Sheppard and his fellow-bishops need Christian solidarity and support rather than attack? Should not SPCK be thoroughly ashamed?

Lay preaching

G. N. Stanton

PAUL S. MINEAR
Matthew: The teacher's gospel
194pp. Darton, Longman and Todd. £5.50.
0 232 51605 7

This lucid short commentary is intended to be used by teachers who are introducing Matthew's Gospel to school or study groups. Paul S. Minear, who is Professor Emeritus at Yale, is convinced, that Matthew the evangelist is himself a teacher who has designed his work to be of maximum help to teachers in Christian congregations towards the end of the first century. So, in line with most recent specialist study of the gospel, Minear is interested in the distinctive themes of the evangelist and the circumstances of the evangelist's own day.

The author believes, surely rightly, that Matthew's Gospel has been written on two levels behind the disciples who accompany Jesus stand the leaders of Christian congregations, some fifty years later, and behind the crowds, the lay members of those churches. Minear set out this view in detail in an essay published in 1974. It has now become the most striking feature of this commentary.

This is an excellent introduction to Matthew. The author draws on recent scholarship, but never parades his knowledge. His comments on individual passages are brief, but always to the point: the whole of the Sermon on the Mount is discussed in only fifteen pages. Paul S. Minear includes extracts from several of his own published essays, by far the most interesting of which is a discussion of J. S. Bach's interpretation of the Matthean Passion.

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